

PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY FROM HIDDEN CANCER RISKS

A guide to safer beauty products

The phrase healthy living is most often used to describe careful eating, avoiding tobacco and abstaining from alcohol. Did you know beauty products – from hair products to perfume – may contain ingredients linked to cancer and other diseases? On average The average American puts roughly 85 to 168 chemicals on their body every day, and 60% of it is absorbed. Healthy living should include using safer beauty products, and educating yourself and your family – but where do you begin? Here are **6 Helpful Tips** to get you started.



Tip 1: Avoid chemical hair treatments

Chemicals in hair relaxers and smoothing treatment can act as hormones, increasing the risk of some cancers. Chemical hair straightening treatments most likely contain formaldehyde or may release the chemical when treated. Formaldehyde is a known cancer-causing chemical.

Learn more about [formaldehyde](#)

Safer option: Use a flat iron to straighten hair instead, so you don't add potentially harmful products to your hair.

Tip 2: Go fragrance-free

Fragrance is a word for a mixture of ingredients that make a product smell a certain way. Many fragrances can contain chemicals linked to cancer, such as styrene, benzene, or benzyl chloride.

Learn more about [fragrance](#)

Safer option: When you choose products labeled "fragrance-free" or unscented," you're avoiding an unnecessary mixture of synthetic chemicals.

Tip 3: Not all nail polish is pretty

Many nail polishes can be harmful, as they contain ingredients like formaldehyde, a nail hardening agent, and phthalates, which increases polish flexibility and reduces brittleness. Both of these toxic agents have been linked to cancer in humans.

Learn more about [phthalates](#)

Safer option: Choose nail polish with labels that read, "3-free", "7-free", or "9-free", as the word free here means free of toxic ingredients; the higher the number, the fewer toxic chemicals inside.

Tip 4: Skip dark, permanent hair dyes

Numerous studies link dark hair dyes with cancers. These dyes can have more than 5,000 chemicals; some are toxic - like aromatic amines - which can increase cancer risk.

Learn more about [aromatic amines](#)

Safer option: Choose semi-permanent, temporary, or vegetable-based dyes for darker hair, as the chemical are less harmful.

Tip 5: Be an empowered purchaser

Use reliable consumer resources to find the safest products. You don't have to be a scientist to find safer products. Products carrying the [Made Safe](#)® label are certified to be free of harmful ingredients. When shopping online, use this tool to identify unsafe items in your cart: [Clearya](#) (Chrome or Mobile App).

Here are some other helpful resources:

- [Skin Deep](#) (Database)
- [Healthy Living](#) (Mobile App)
- [Detox Me](#) (Mobile App)

Tip 6: Your voice is powerful - make a difference

Beauty products are an 84 billion dollar industry, yet it is one of the least regulated product retail sectors in the country. It is legal for companies to use ingredients known to cause cancer and other diseases. And since many of us can't shop our way out of this problem, we can advocate for smarter, stronger regulatory protections to keep everyone safe and healthy.

Join state and federal policy campaigns working to improve the safety of products in grocery stores, pharmacies, cosmetics counters, and online retailers.

Action Alerts are messages that you you way to take action. Form signing petitions to influencing policy, you can sign up for action alerts from [Campaign for Safe Cosmetics](#) for easy actions to take to improve product safety.

[Women for a Health Environment](#) provides education about environmental risks to human health, along with programs, advocacy, and way to get involved with making your voice heard.



Cancer & Environment Network
of Southwestern Pennsylvania

