

# CBS 2 Consumer Report: Drop Dead Gorgeous Experts: Chemicals In Cosmetics Will Take Toll On You

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Nov 16, 2006 12:05 am US/EasternCBS) NEW YORK - Every morning we lather, slather, spritz and smear ourselves with everything from shampoo to self-tanners to makeup and more.

"Woman use an average of about 12 products a day," said Jane Houlihan, Vice President of Research for non-profit Environmental Working Group.

But have you ever stopped to think what's in all these products?

"One-hundred sixty-seven different chemicals, that we are putting on our skin, lips, hair," Houlihan said.

Chemicals, some health experts warn, may turn even the most innocent looking soaps and moisturizers into toxic cocktails that could cause cancer or reproductive damage over years of prolonged use.

"If you just put them in a lab dish with cells, they are incredibly toxic," said Houlihan, who recently rated about 15,000 personal care products.

What did she find? More and more manufacturers are now using potentially hazardous materials, called nano-particles.

"The concern is that these particles are so small, we can be exposed to large amounts of them, they may absorb through the skin, we may inhale them," Houlihan said.

Added patient Ellen Wedels: "I experienced itching, inflammation, there were even pustules surrounding my eyes."

Wedels is one of many patients Dr. Ellen Marmur, Chief of Dermatology at Mount Sinai Medical Center, said she sees with serious reactions to cosmetics and creams that should not be shrugged off.

"Irritation can lead to an inflammatory background or environment on your skin that can directly lead to skin cancer," Marmur said.

Wedels learned an expensive lesson after using a full-of-promises \$125 eye cream. The reaction forced her to wear sunglasses for a week to hide her sore eyes.

"Often expensive products have all kinds of extra ingredients that can be even more irritating," Marmur said.

Ingredients, like phthalates, that can keep your mascara from running, stop your nail polish from chipping and help your fragrance linger just a little longer. But, doctors also said these chemicals all carry a hefty price, since they may be contributing to reproductive and developmental disorders in children.

Dr. Maida Galvez is currently studying exposure levels to phthalates in a group of 6-to-8-year-old New York City girls.

"The question is whether or not these low-level exposures for long periods of time have long-term health effects and we are just beginning to scratch the surface," Galvez said.

Animal studies find organ and reproductive damage, primarily in male offspring.

So why the lack of human studies? Current law allows cosmetic companies to be self-regulating, so the FDA cannot require product safety studies.

The group representing the cosmetic industry said, "scientists review the latest ... research, including nanotech research, before bringing a product to market. The general scientific consensus is that they pose no risk to human health."

Still, until more human research is done, the best advice from doctors is to keep your cosmetics and daily beauty routine very simple.