

# Choosing Safer Personal Care Products

An adult is exposed to an average of 126 different chemical ingredients each day from personal care products. Our skin will absorb some of the ingredients in these products.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT CAN I DO?

Read labels!

Check out the ingredients in your products using tools at this website:

[www.ewg.org/skindeep](http://www.ewg.org/skindeep)

Less is best- Reduce your chemical exposure by using fewer products, in smaller amounts and/or less often.

Choose products with fewer ingredients to reduce potential health risks such as allergies.

Limit children's use of cosmetics.



*Personal care products include shampoos, conditioners, lotions, soaps, toothpaste, deodorants, hair dyes, lip balm, cosmetics, shaving cream, perfumes and many other products that we put on our bodies every day. An adult will use an average of nine products each day, while teens will use up to 17 products daily.<sup>1</sup>*

## READ THE LABEL!

### Research the ingredients

Some are safer than others. Generally, the first third of the ingredient list makes up 90-95% of the product, the next third about 5 to 8% and the last third 1 – 3%.

### Organic

The regulations in Canada that pertain to certified organic foods are not applied to cosmetics. There is no Federal approval process for certifying cosmetics in Canada.

### Natural

Even synthetic ingredients can be labeled 'natural'. Health Canada does not regulate the use of this word.

### Hypoallergenic

Although companies usually avoid putting known allergens in products with this label, the product can still cause an allergic reaction. Use of the term is not regulated by Health Canada and therefore doesn't mean anything.

### Fragrance-free

Companies are not required to list ingredients used in their fragrances. Fragrances can contain hundreds of chemicals and are among the top five allergens in the world. "Fragrance-free" often means that a product has no odour, but synthetic ingredients may have been added to mask the smell of the product.

<sup>1</sup>EWG (Environmental Working Group). 2004. Skin Deep Cosmetics Safety Database: Exposures add up.

# Antibacterial Products— Why Not?

## WHY USE SOAPS CONTAINING TRICLOSAN WHEN PLAIN SOAP AND WATER ARE AS EFFECTIVE?

There are three main chemicals used in antibacterial products: triclosan, triclocarbon and quaternary ammonium compounds.

### Personal care products that may contain antibacterial ingredients:

Liquid and bar soaps  
Toothpaste  
Mouthwash  
Cosmetics like lip gloss and cover sticks  
Deodorants  
Shaving gels  
Acne lotions

### Antibacterial ingredients can also be found in plastic products and clothing under the trade names of Microban or BioFresh.

Garbage bags  
Food cutting boards  
Kitchen knives  
Food storage containers  
Plastic utensils  
High chair trays  
Children's toys  
Mattress pads  
Pillows  
Pet beds  
Air filters  
Sleeping bags  
Footwear

## TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT, CHOOSE PRODUCTS THAT DO NOT CONTAIN ANTIBACTERIAL INGREDIENTS.



*It's everywhere you look—soaps, cosmetics, dishwashing liquid—all touting the benefits of antibacterial additives. These products claim to kill germs and promote good health. However, anti-bacterial additives such as Triclosan may actually be harmful to human health and to the environment.*

### ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Over 95% of the products containing triclosan are disposed of in residential drains. Some effects include:

- contamination of water; triclosan is not removed by wastewater treatment plants.
- probable promotion of the emergence of bacteria resistant to antibiotics.
- conversion to dioxin (a highly toxic carcinogen) when exposed to sunlight.
- toxicity to algae, which changes stream ecosystems.
- absorption and accumulation in fatty tissue; methyl triclosan has been found in fish tissue.

### HEALTH EFFECTS

Triclosan or Triclocarbon are absorbed through the skin or by mouth and have been found in breast milk and urine.

They can:

- cause skin irritation and contact dermatitis.
- increase the likelihood of developing allergies.
- interfere with the body's thyroid hormone metabolism.
- act as endocrine disruptors.

Antibacterial products are an important tool for hospitals, but they do not promote good health when used in a household setting.

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[www.ecosuperior.org](http://www.ecosuperior.org)

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