



# THE NEXT STEP Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

## Detoxing Your Body Care Routine

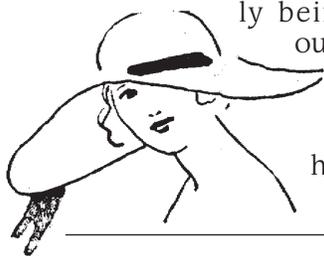
Throughout each day, every day, people of all ages and genders put products on their bodies (and those of others) without thinking about the toxics they might contain.

So we might start the day with soap, shaving cream, deodorant, lotion, sunscreen, makeup, perfume, and maybe a little body glitter. Some days we might use hand sanitizer, hair products (such as shampoo, conditioner, gel, hair spray, and coloring), or nail products (such as polish, remover, and treatments). Babies, of course, have their own set of potions. Then, as the day ends, it might be time for cleansers, scrubs, exfoliants, astringents, healing creams, and perhaps a relaxing bubble bath.

But surely we don't have to worry about these products' toxicity, since we're putting them on the *outside* of our bodies, right? Well, actually, the skin is a porous organ and can allow many materials into our bodies. In fact, medicine takes advantage of this biological principle with direct drug delivery methods such as ointments and patches.

Plus, when we use body care products, we breathe them in, get them in our eyes, transfer them to our food from our lips as we eat, etc. As a result of all this, the toxics within these products are commonly found in

our bodies, and that exposure is being linked to health harm.



But, certainly, if these products are for sale, they must be safe, right? Someone must be watching. Well, not really. According to the Environmental Working Group (EWG), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) "has no authority to require companies to test cosmetics products for safety. The agency does not review or approve the vast majority of products or ingredients before they go on the market. [The] FDA conducts pre-market reviews only of certain cosmetics color additives and active ingredients that are classified as over-the-counter drugs." The agency has only prohibited a handful of ingredients, in contrast to the European Union (EU), which has banned over 1,000 ingredients from use in cosmetics.

OK, but then all we have to do is look for products labeled "natural" or "hypoallergenic," right? Well, actually, the FDA says that these terms can "mean anything or nothing at all." According to EWG, "[m]ost cosmetic marketing claims are unregulated, and companies are rarely, if ever, required to back them up, even for children's products."

### What you can do

**1) Look up your current or potential products in EWG's Skin Deep® Cosmetics Database** ([www.ewg.org/skindEEP](http://www.ewg.org/skindEEP)). This site covers more than makeup and has a handy ranking system. Also, assessments are explained, so you can identify what criteria you want to use.

**2) If your current products score poorly, decide which ones you want to use up before swapping with a healthier product,**

and those you want to replace right away.

**3) Buy products with ingredients you recognize** (and don't need a chemistry degree to pronounce). It's generally easier to find healthier products at natural food stores and farmers' markets. There are also good options at Rosemary's Garden in Sebastopol and [www.organicconsumers.org/btc/BuyingGuide.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/btc/BuyingGuide.cfm).

**4) Look for 100% certified organic beauty products.** To get this certification, products need to be non-synthetic, food-based, and grown without toxics. If a product isn't 100% certified organic, be sure to evaluate the non-organic ingredients. The USDA organic standards are for food and haven't been defined for the wider range of materials in beauty products. (Read more about this at [www.usdaorganicskincare.com](http://www.usdaorganicskincare.com) and [www.makingcosmetics.com/Organic-Certification-of-Cosmetics\\_ep\\_66.html](http://www.makingcosmetics.com/Organic-Certification-of-Cosmetics_ep_66.html).)

**5) Learn the key worst ingredients, to help avoid them.** These vary by product type and include:

- **Sodium lauryl (ether) sulfate (SLS, SLES).** These industrial degreasers (found in most personal care and cleaning products) are known skin, lung, and eye irritants.

- **Parabens.** These widely-used preservatives (in makeup, cleansers, deodorants, and more) are linked to increased cancer, endocrine disruption, and reproductive toxicity.

- **Synthetic colors.** Look for FD&C or D&C (e.g., FD&C blue 1). Derived from petroleum or coal tar, these are skin irritants, suspected human carcinogens, linked to ADHD in children — and banned by the EU.

- **Polyethylene glycol (PEG).** It's often contaminated with carcinogenic 1,4-dioxane and ethylene oxide.

- **DEA, TEA, and MEA.** These emulsifiers and foaming agents (in shampoos, body washes, and soaps) are suspected carcinogens.

- **Formaldehyde.** This probable carcinogen (found in nail products, hair dye, fake eyelash adhesives, and shampoos) is banned in the EU.

- **Paraphenylenediamine (PPD).** Used in hair products and dyes, it's toxic to skin and immune systems.

See *Body Care*, over

## Sebastopol's Public Works Is Successfully Skipping Toxic Pesticides

A reader recently asked me if the City of Sebastopol is using toxic herbicides in its parks, because he'd seen a City worker spraying something around a tree's roots.

I was glad to investigate, and it led me to wonder how the City's doing in avoiding the use of toxic pesticides. After all, it's been 14 years since the City Council made its commitment to avoid using them on City property (unless there were no viable alternatives). (Note: The Council also resolved then to encourage city residents to avoid toxic pesticides, which led to this newsletter's creation. The full resolution is at [www.healthyworld.org/STEPRes.html](http://www.healthyworld.org/STEPRes.html).)

So I called Rich Emig, Sebastopol's Public Works Superintendent, and was delighted to hear that, since

the Council's resolution in 2000, his department has successfully avoided using toxic pesticides in managing the exterior spaces on City land.

There's been only one exception, in the early years, when there was a small tight spot near one of their work sheds, which they felt was best addressed with toxics; they got the Council's approval for that use. But, overall, I could tell that avoiding toxics was just their new normal, which made me very happy.

I also asked Emig how they address weeds, and he said that they mostly mow and use "weed eaters." Plus they use a clove oil product (Matran EC) in focused spots, such as around trees and the edges of lawns, where mowers can't get. Yes, as in the cloves traditionally used in cooking, fragrances, etc.

I looked into Matran EC and found that its main ingredient isn't acutely toxic, and it has no listed systemic problems. It can be a mild

irritant, especially at the time of use, so user caution is warranted. That's why Sebastopol workers wear rubber gloves and cloth coveralls when applying it. (For lots of details on Matran, see [www.marinwater.org/DocumentCenter/View/253](http://www.marinwater.org/DocumentCenter/View/253).)

So that's the product the reader saw being used. It does "burn" the weeds, so it can look like a toxic herbicide was used. But it wasn't!

I also want to congratulate Public Works for helping create a less-toxic town for us all. This story shows that, even with larger operations, it doesn't have to be a big deal to avoid toxics, including to manage weeds.

Matran EC is available at Harmony Farm Supply, but only in a larger concentrated size. Harmony also has other less-toxic options in smaller sizes. For more about other materials and approaches you can use, including vinegar, see *Weeds* in our STEP Online Index, [www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html](http://www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html).

### Body Care, continued

• **Triclosan.** This antibacterial material (used in toothpastes, cleansers, antiperspirants, etc.) is an endocrine disrupter and skin irritant, harms fish and other wildlife, and likely increases antibiotic-resistant bacteria. (Learn more via *Triclosan* in the STEP Online Index, [www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html](http://www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html).)

• **Fragrance.** Very toxic materials can be hidden by this innocent word. (See more under *Perfumes & Scents* in the STEP Online Index.)

I hope that this information helps you and your skin glow with truly healthy and natural beauty.

*SOURCES: "Your Skin: It Absorbs!", by Tracy Ternes, [www.downtoearth.org/health/general-health/your-skin-it-absorbs](http://www.downtoearth.org/health/general-health/your-skin-it-absorbs) • EWG's Skin Deep® Cosmetics Database, [www.ewg.org/skindeep](http://www.ewg.org/skindeep) • "20 toxic ingredients to avoid," by Katherine Martinko, *Teehugger*, February 25, 2014 • "10 Toxic Beauty Ingredients to Avoid," by Vanessa Cunningham, Nov. 12, 2013, [www.huffingtonpost.com/vanessa-cunningham/dangerous-beauty-products\\_b\\_4168587.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/vanessa-cunningham/dangerous-beauty-products_b_4168587.html) • "'Dirty Dozen' cosmetic chemicals to avoid," David Suzuki Foundation, [www.davidsuzuki.org/issues/health/science/toxics/dirty-dozen-cosmetic-chemicals](http://www.davidsuzuki.org/issues/health/science/toxics/dirty-dozen-cosmetic-chemicals)*

## The Stories Continue

■ **Finding your less-toxic shower curtain.** As followup to my article on buying less-toxic shower curtains (*TNS XIV/1*), I wanted to let you know that Sebastopol Hardware has various alternatives to the standard smelly toxic PVC curtains. The store's offerings include ones made from PEVA (chlorine-free vinyl), polyester, and other fabrics — all easily viewed in a hanging display. However, if you want to assess based on scent, the samples have probably outgassed, so I suggest smelling your desired option in its package before finalizing your selection.

■ **Improving toxic labels for sofas.** We've previously discussed California's pioneering choice to change its rules so that toxic flame retardants are no longer required on sofas, bedding, and more. Unfortunately, these materials weren't really protecting their owners — but were harming us, firefighters, and wildlife. Furniture made under the new and improved rules are being labeled "TB-117-2013." However, that just means that a manufacturer *could* avoid these toxics, not that it *did*.

A new bill (SB-1019) seeks to go a step further with this, by having product tags inform consumers if a piece of upholstered furniture was or wasn't made with these toxic flame retardants. Proposed by State Senator Mark Leno, this bill has passed the state Senate and is now working through the Assembly. Firefighters, health, and environmental groups are co-sponsors. To learn more, and voice your support, go to <http://sd11.senate.ca.gov> and [http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/vsingla/bill\\_for\\_disclosure\\_of\\_flame\\_r.html](http://switchboard.nrdc.org/blogs/vsingla/bill_for_disclosure_of_flame_r.html).

### ABOUT STEP

**The Next STEP** (TNS) is published six times a year by the **Sebastopol Toxics Education Program** (STEP). **STEP is a project of the City of Sebastopol**, implemented by local citizen volunteers. **STEP's mission** is to support city residents in reducing their toxic use and exposure, creating a healthier and safer Sebastopol for everyone.

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