

Cosmetic Ingredients to Avoid

Stay safe and skip products that contain any of these dangerous chemicals.

FIVE YEARS AGO, LAS VEGAS-BASED journalist Kim Erickson began researching cosmetic ingredients—and what she found horrified her. She details her findings in her new book, *Drop-Dead Gorgeous: Protecting Yourself from the Hidden Dangers of Cosmetics* (Contemporary Books, 2002). “You can expose yourself to 200 synthetic chemicals before your first cup of coffee in the morning,” she says. Many of these chemicals warrant concern, but Erickson considers the following three ingredients the most dangerous:

1. Coal Tar Colors: Many have been linked to cancer and have not been rigorously tested for safety. These colors are found in makeup and count-

less other bodycare products, and they are listed on labels as FD&C or D&C colors.



Some makeup may offer a dangerous dose of color.

2. Formaldehyde: This ingredient can cause respiratory irritation and is also linked to cancer. It is found in nail polishes, shampoos, and other bodycare products. Certain preservatives, like DMDM hydantoin and quaternium 15, can break down into formaldehyde.

3. Dibutyl Phthalate: It has been shown to cause birth defects in animals. It’s found in nail polishes, perfumes, and other bodycare products.

Growing Healthy Nails

Silica supplements may make nails stronger and smoother.

TAKING SILICA HAS LONG BEEN touted as a way to repair weak nails, and a recent unpublished study has confirmed this use. In the study, all women who took silica supplements for eight to 16 weeks experienced smoother



nails with less peeling and cracking. This study may be the first double-blind, placebo-controlled research on using silica for nails, says Steven Bratman, M.D., a natural medicine consultant in Ft. Collins, Colo.

Silica, a form of the mineral silicon, may help your body produce collagen and strengthen bone. If you have brittle nails, take 280 mg of supplemental silica a day, says James Belanger, N.D., a Lexington, Mass.-based naturopath whose patients have successfully treated brittle nails with the mineral.

Pamper Your Skin

This luxurious sugar rub rejuvenates dull, dry skin.

The Product: Inara Babassu Sugar Rub

costs \$45.50; 888-688-7565;

The Promise: This rub contains turbinado sugar, babassu oil, soybean oil, honey, and essential oils. It comes in a pretty reusable clay pot and promises to exfoliate and soften your skin.

www.inaraorganic.com.

Our Verdict: We applied this rub in the shower and found it made our skin noticeably smoother. It’s pricey, but as an occasional indulgence it’s worth it.

To Buy: Three scents (each is a mixture of essential oils) are available. The 15.5-ounce rub



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