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BEAUTY WATCHWORDS

Foods with bad-for-you ingredients aren't the only things we should avoid. The same is true for some of our favorite washes, creams and scrubs. Here are some common culprits to be on the lookout for.

FD&C AND D&C COLORS

WHAT IT IS FD&C or D&C colors are made from coal tar derivatives.

WHY IT'S BAD Listed by the EPA as human respiratory toxins, they are also considered allergens and skin irritants.

LOOK FOR Colors from natural sources like annatto, beets, carrot, chlorophyll, and minerals like iron and mica

BRANDS TO TRY Jane Iredale Cosmetics, RMS Beauty, Vapour Organics

HYDROQUINONE

WHAT IT IS Banned in some countries, this is a skin-lightening agent known to cause DNA damage and liver cancer.

WHY IT'S BAD It can cause serious skin irritation, swelling and thick skin.

LOOK FOR Kojic acid, licorice extract (glycyrrhizinate) and soy proteins

BRANDS TO TRY Origins, Arcona

PARABENS

WHAT IT IS Parabens are synthetic preservatives (like propylparaben) found in creams, lotions and makeup.

WHY IT'S BAD Though controversial, recent studies have shown that parabens can mimic estrogen in the body, and have been linked to breast and ovarian cancer.

LOOK FOR Paraben-free

BRANDS TO TRY Rodin Olio Lusso, Body Deli, Tata Harper

SULFATES

WHAT IT IS Sulfates (like sodium myreth-sulfate) are harsh detergents found in cleansers and toothpaste.

WHY IT'S BAD At even low-use concentration, they can cause skin and eye irritation as well as penetrate deep into the skin.

LOOK FOR Castile soap, yucca extract, soap bark extract and coco glucoside

BRANDS TO TRY Hamadi Beauty, Yarok Hair

TOLUENE

WHAT IT IS Toluene (a.k.a. methylbenzene) is a solvent in nail polish that helps create a smooth application.

WHY IT'S BAD Inhalation can irritate the respiratory tract, and cause headaches and insomnia. Stored in fat tissue, it may lead to developmental delays or attention deficit in children of women with chronic exposure.

LOOK FOR Toluene, formaldehyde or DB-free

BRANDS TO TRY SpaRitual, OPI, PritiNYC—Rona Berg