

The Growing Concern of Parabens

by Jeremy Likeness

Parabens are a group of chemicals used as preservatives in both food and cosmetic products. Some are found in very low levels in nature. This class of chemical is also known as esters of p-hydroxybenzoic acid. Some common names include benzylparaben, isobutylparaben, butylparaben, n-propylparaben, ethylparaben, and methylparaben.

A recent study linked parabens with breast cancer: "Concentration of Parabens in Human Breast Tumors." *Darbre, PD. et al. J. Appl. Toxicol. 24, 5-13 (2004).*

Parabens have been used as preservatives since the 1920s. They are used to prevent the growth of bacteria. By far the most prevalent use has been in cosmetics, skin care products, shampoos, conditioners, sunscreens, deodorants, and soaps. A report that was published in 1984 - Elder, RL. "Final report on the safety assessment of methylparaben, ethylparaben, propylparaben and butylparaben." *Journal of the American College of Toxicology*, vol. 3, pp. 147-209, 1984 - estimated that parabens were used in over 13,200 different cosmetic products.

Recent evidence from over a dozen scientific studies has indicated that several types of parabens can bind to the estrogen receptor and cause estrogen-like responses when tested in laboratory animals or in a variety of tissue cultures. In studies using animals, the estrogenic effects were not found when fed, only when applied to or injected into the skin. There is no comprehensive research regarding the long-term effects of low-dose paraben use.

In these studies, the researchers looked at twenty (20) human breast tumours and found synthetic chemicals known as parabens in eighteen (18) of them. The level of parabens in four of the tumours so high that it could have had a damaging biological effect on cells. It is the first time parabens (para-hydroxybenzoic acids) have been detected within tumours, suggesting that the man-made chemicals accumulated in the breast tissue after being absorbed through the skin.

According to The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, "the chemicals in any one consumer product alone are unlikely to cause harm. But unfortunately, we are repeatedly exposed to industrial chemicals from many different sources on a daily basis, including cosmetics and personal care products."

The FDA proclaims that "FDA is only able to regulate cosmetics after products are released to the marketplace. Neither cosmetic products nor cosmetic ingredients are reviewed or approved by FDA before they are sold to the public. FDA cannot require companies to do safety testing of their cosmetic products before marketing. If, however, the safety of a cosmetic product has not been substantiated, the product's label must read **WARNING: The safety of this product has not been determined.**"

This means, essentially, that cosmetics are not tightly regulated by the FDA. In fact, like supplements, most of the regulation happens only in response to consumer complaints. This is a reactive, rather than proactive, approach that occurs when perhaps the damage has already been inflicted. Even more highly regulated products like Vioxx, which were originally approved by the FDA, have been pulled from the market after widespread use by millions. In the case of Vioxx, concerns were that it raised the risk of heart attack and stroke - Arthritis Drug Vioxx Being Pulled.

To learn more about FDA regulation of cosmetics, read this page.

Skin is the body's largest organ and it can absorb healthy and unhealthy substances that are applied to it. Quality skin care will use pharmaceutical grade complexes that are thoroughly tested by dermatologists, allergists, and ophthalmologists to ensure quality and safety. There is now a complete skin care line available that is 100% paraben-free. It uses something called "self-preserving technology." This is a patent-pending blend of botanicals, antioxidants, and active ingredients that keep the product fresh without the need for parabens. To learn more, read this press release (PDF Format).

[Click here to learn more about paraben-free skin care.](#)

Be an informed consumer and learn exactly what is placed into the products you use on a daily basis. While concerns are raised each day regarding the use of synthetic chemicals and preservatives, very rarely do you hear of a recall for products that are organic or all-natural. Your company should readily disclose their full ingredients list with explanations for each ingredient - including why it was used and the rationale behind the dose. If you are looking for a high-quality, pharmaceutical grade natural paraben-free skin care line, take a look at this product line that focuses on nourishing the skin at the cellular level by providing vitamins, minerals, botanicals, and other nutrients your skin deserves.