

DANGEROUS HAIR CHEMICALS IN WOMEN'S HAIR PRODUCTS

MARIA COFER

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS OF CHEMICALS IN HAIR CARE PRODUCTS

Chemicals are present in nearly all hair care products, but studies have shown that their concentration tends to be higher in those commonly used or marketed toward Black women. It is important for women—especially African American women—to be aware of the potentially harmful effects these chemicals can have on their bodies. In particular, certain chemicals in these products may disrupt hormones, potentially contributing to a range of health issues.

WHAT ARE HORMONES?

Hormones are chemical messengers produced by glands in the endocrine system. They travel through the bloodstream and help regulate various bodily functions, including growth and development, metabolism, sexual health and reproduction, and mood regulation. An imbalance in hormones can contribute to serious health problems, including diabetes, weight issues, infertility, weakened bones, and other complications.



HOW HAIR PRODUCTS AFFECT HORMONES

A study referenced in an article on the Silent Spring Institute website found that many hair products, particularly those used by women of color, contain chemicals that can disrupt hormone production. These chemicals, known as endocrine disruptors, have been linked to a range of health issues, including early puberty, preterm births, uterine fibroids, infertility, and increased risks of breast and endometrial cancer.¹

HARMFUL CHEMICALS FOUND IN HAIR PRODUCTS

The same study identified 45 different endocrine disruptors in 18 common hair products used by African American women. These chemicals were associated with asthma, reproductive disorders, birth defects, and cancer. Alarmingly, the study also revealed that products marketed for children, such as hair relaxers, contained the highest levels of five chemicals banned in the European Union.²

In an article published on PubMed, it stated that chemicals found in Black hair care products, such as phthalates, parabens, alkylphenols, cyclosiloxanes, and UV filters, can disrupt hormones. These chemicals may act like estrogen or block other hormones like androgens, potentially affecting reproductive health and metabolism.³

1 SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE. (2023, JANUARY 18). HAIR PRODUCTS FOR BLACK WOMEN CONTAIN A MIX OF HAZARDOUS INGREDIENTS. SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE. [HTTPS://SILENTSPRING.ORG/NEWS/HAIR-PRODUCTS-BLACK-WOMEN-CONTAIN-MIX-HAZARDOUS-INGREDIENTS](https://silentspring.org/news/hair-products-black-women-contain-mix-hazardous-ingredients)

2 SILENT SPRING INSTITUTE, 2023.

3 [HTTPS://PMC.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/ARTICLES/PMC8812815/](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8812815/)



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Make Your Own Hair Products: Research natural hair care recipes to create your own homemade hair products. Using natural ingredients like avocado, coconut oil, honey, aloe vera, and flax seeds can create safe, effective hair treatments. These ingredients are known to moisturize, nourish, and promote hair growth without the harmful chemicals.

Research Natural Products: Look for paraben-free, fragrance (perfume)-free hair care products. Read the ingredient labels carefully and use resources like EWG Skin Deep to check if ingredients are safe (Environmental Working Group, n.d.).⁴

⁴ RESEARCH NATURAL PRODUCTS: LOOK FOR PARABEN-FREE, FRAGRANCE (PERFUME)-FREE HAIR CARE PRODUCTS. READ THE INGREDIENT LABELS CAREFULLY AND USE RESOURCES LIKE EWG SKIN DEEP TO CHECK IF INGREDIENTS ARE SAFE (ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP, N.D.)

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