

# Greenwich Sentinel



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## Breast Cancer Awareness – Should Always Include Reading Labels

By Julia Chiappetta

October is here and with it Breast Cancer Awareness and Education are at full throttle. For me, an important and surprising fact I learned early in my research was that 85% of all breast cancers are not due to hereditary factors, but rather environmental factors. These factors include: diet, nutrition, sleep, stress, lifestyle, pollution and toxins. Personally, I had not given much thought about what I had been putting on my body until I started to hunker down to learn what I could do to help myself get well.

According to a study by Harvard University, the average working person is exposed to over 100 chemicals before they even get to work in the morning. Many of these harmful chemicals show up in cosmetics, hair and body products. I wrote about this in my book, Breast Cancer-the notebook. When my quest for health began 18 years ago, I made every effort to make my home as soothing, clean and toxic-free as possible. I trashed everything - food, cosmetics, hair and body products, toothpaste, mouthwash, soaps, detergents, cleaning solutions and my microwave.

One distressing thing I uncovered was that harmful chemicals are hidden behind words like: pure, natural, fragrance and even organic.

Environmental Working Group's (EWG) message to cosmetic manufacturers is, "Shed bad actor ingredients that disrupt the hormone system, cause allergies and may accelerate skin cancer."

Labels on cosmetics and body care products are a tough code to crack, and the industry is shockingly unregulated, making it impossible to trust claims by manufacturers. For example, a word such as natural can be used by anyone for anything. Even organic is misleading. Companies are supposed to use an organic label only if all ingredients are certified organic, so they say "made with organic" if it contains a minimum of 70 percent certified organic ingredients. So, what about the other 30%? The entire industry has an innocent-until-proven-guilty approach to ingredients. Unless a chemical used in beauty products is proven to cause harm to humans, it's classified as GRAS, "generally recognized as safe."

I am reminded now about one product I loved and had used since my twenties. It was an after-shower body oil, in a clear, sleek bottle, deemed "all natural," from a well-known company. But, when I checked the label, it had the word "fragrance". So, I dug deeper only to find that I was slathering a bevy of harmful chemicals into my largest organ, my derma, for decades.

Yikes! Needless to say, I was upset and felt duped, because of an accidental loophole in FDA regulations, that allows companies to use the word "fragrance" as a substitute for a whole list of chemicals you don't want absorbed into your skin.

In a recent research letter, Dr. Steve Xu, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and his colleagues, looked at the number of adverse events reported to the FDA and found that over a 12-year period, there were 5,144 health-related complaints submitted due to cosmetic products. The three most commonly cited products were for hair care, skin care and tattoos. "This isn't designed to be alarmist," says Xu. He added, "We have this huge industry and there are lots of chemicals in these products that largely go unregulated." New research shows that health-related complaints about cosmetics and skin care products are at an all-time high. That's concerning, because addressing the problem, or getting a potentially unsafe product off the market, is not a simple process. Currently, cosmetic manufacturers have no legal obligation to report health problems from their products to the FDA. Also, cosmetics do not need to go through a pre-market approval process before they are sold in stores and regulators do not assess the

safety and effectiveness of the claims on the products. Instead, people and doctors are asked to report any health complications to the FDA's database called the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition's Adverse Event Reporting System, (CFSAN), so they can determine if investigation are necessary. Adding that the global cosmetics industry took in over \$265 billion in revenue in 2017 with very little active surveillance.

Please be on the look-out for these dangerous ingredients:

**D E A / T E A / M E A :** Suspected carcinogens used as emulsifiers and foaming agents for shampoos, body washes, soaps.

**Ethoxylated surfactants and 1,4-dioxane:** Never listed because it's a by-product made from adding carcinogenic ethylene oxide to make other chemicals less harsh. It has been found in a high percentage of baby washes in the U.S. Avoid ingredients containing the letters "eth."

**Formaldehyde:** Probable carcinogen and irritant found in nail products, hair dye, fake eyelash adhesives, shampoos. Banned in the EU.

**Fragrance/Parfum:** A catchall for hidden chemicals, such as phthalates.

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**Hydroquinone:** Used for lightening skin. Banned in the UK, rated most toxic.

**Lead:** Known carcinogen found in lipstick and hair dye, but never listed because it's a contaminant, not an ingredient.

**Mercury:** Known allergen found in mascara and some eye drops.

**Mineral oil:** By-product of petroleum used in baby oil, moisturizers, styling gels.

**Oxybenzone:** Active ingredient in some sunscreens.

**Parabens:** Used as preservatives, found in many products.

**Paraphenylenediamine (PPD):** Used in hair products and dyes and toxic to skin.

**Phthalates:** Plasticizers banned in the EU &

California, found in kids' toys, fragrances, perfumes, deodorants and lotions.

**Polyethylene glycol (PEG):** Penetration enhancer used in many products and often contaminated with 1,4-dioxane and ethylene oxide.

**Silicone-derived emollients:** Used to make a product feel soft, do not biodegrade and block skin from breathing.

**Sodium lauryl (ether) sulfate (SLS, SLES):** A former industrial degreaser, used to make soap foamy.

**Talc:** Similar to asbestos in composition and found in baby powder, eye shadow, blush and deodorant.

**Toluene:** Known to disrupt the immune and endocrine systems and often hidden under the

word "fragrance".

**Triclosan:** Found in antibacterial products, hand sanitizers, and deodorants.

In closing, my heart is filled with joy today, looking back and thanking Jesus for healing me and for the generous doctors who continue to guide me to make informed decisions.

This October, please love your breasts, love your body and be gentle with your heart. Now, more than ever, please consider taking in more nutrients, by starting each day with a super yummy, organic, green juice. But, most of all, please try to find time to give back and encourage others, because kindness can change a life forever.

For list of references please visit [www.GreenwichSentinel.com](http://www.GreenwichSentinel.com).

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