

Parabens

In Baby Care Products

What Are They?

Parabens are a type of preservative commonly found in personal care products and cosmetics, typically in low concentrations (0.3% or less). Methylparaben, propylparaben, and butylparaben are most commonly used. They are often used in combinations and prevent microbial growth in consumer products.

Health Impacts

- Parabens are weak estrogen mimics
- They belong to a group of chemicals known as endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) which are capable of interfering with the human hormones.
- EDCs may be associated with altered reproductive function, increased rates of breast cancer, abnormal growth patterns and neurodevelopmental delays in children, and changes immune function.
- Other, more powerful, endocrine disrupting chemicals present in the environment include phthalates, bisphenyl A (BPA), and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).



Concerns



Health Canada has deemed parabens safe as used in cosmetics, and continues to monitor and review relevant scientific data. They are not currently regulated in cosmetics and personal care products



There are limitations in the available research regarding children and their special vulnerabilities.

- Long-term, age/gender specific, individual susceptibility, synergistic, cumulative, and aggregate effects are unknown.

Recommendations For Parents

- Stay informed about the chemicals in different products and the effects they may have
- Be aware there may be several types of endocrine disruptors in the products you use. Read products labels and do your own research if you have concerns about the ingredients
- Use personal care products in moderation, as needed
- Follow you physician's instructions for medical conditions (e.g. eczema)

Sources

- David Suzuki Foundation. 2015. Parabens. <http://davidsuzuki.org/issues/health/science/toxics/chemicals-in-your-cosmetics---parabens/>
- Health Canada. 2015. Safety of Cosmetic Ingredients. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/cosmet-person/labelling-etiquetage/ingredients-eng.php#a4.7>
- U.S. FDA. 2007. Parabens. http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/ProductsIngredients/Ingredients/ucm128042.htm#What_are_parabens
- World Health Organization (WHO). 2015. Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals. <http://www.who.int/ceh/risks/cehemerging2/en/>
- The Environmental Working Group (www.ewg.org)
- Good Guide (www.goodguide.com)
- Baby Center (www.babycenter.ca)