

What Ingredients Do I Need To Avoid When Looking for Soaps for My Body?

Certain chemical ingredients can potentially cause problems for your skin when applied as a liquid or bar soap and are best avoided.

Sodium Lauryl/Laureth Sulfate (SLS/SLES)

Sodium lauryl sulfate is a surfactant, detergent and emulsifier used in thousands of cosmetic products, as well as in industrial cleaners. Present in nearly all shampoos, toothpastes, body washes and cleansers, liquid hand soaps, laundry detergents and bath oils and bath salts.

SLS breaks down your skin's moisture barrier, easily penetrating skin, and allowing other chemicals to penetrate by increasing skin permeability by approximately 100-fold.

Combined with other chemicals, SLS becomes a "nitrosamine", a potent class of carcinogen.

Research studies have linked SLS to skin and eye irritation, organ toxicity, reproductive and developmental toxicity, endocrine disruption, neurotoxicity, cellular changes, possible mutations and cancer.

Dioxane

Common in a wide range of products as part of PEG, Polysorbates, Laureth, and ethoxylated alcohols. These compounds are usually contaminated with high concentrations of highly volatile 1,4-dioxane which is easily absorbed through your skin.

This "probably carcinogen to humans" substance has received a "high hazard" rating from EWG's Skin Deep and is especially toxic to the brain, central nervous system, kidneys and liver.

A synthetic derivative of coconut, watch for misleading language on labels, stating "comes from coconut".

Avoid any product with indications of ethoxylation, which include: "myreth," "oleth," "laureth," "cetareth," any other "eth," "PEG," "polyethylene," "polyethylene glycol," "polyoxyethylene," or "oxynol," in ingredient names.

Parabens

Widely used as preservatives in an estimated 13,200 cosmetic and skin care products, parabens have been connected with breast cancer in studies.

They have hormone-disrupting qualities mimicking estrogen, and can interfere with your body's endocrine system. Studies have shown that parabens can affect your

body much like estrogens, which can lead to diminished muscle mass, extra fat storage, and male breast growth.

The EPA has linked methyl parabens in particular to metabolic, developmental, hormonal, and neurological disorders, as well as various cancers.

Propylene glycol

A common ingredient in personal care products, it's been shown to cause dermatitis, kidney or liver abnormalities, and may inhibit skin cell growth or cause skin irritation.

Also found in engine coolants, antifreeze, rubber cleaners, adhesives, and paints and varnishes.

Diethanolamine or DEA

DEA readily reacts with nitrite preservatives and contaminants to create nitrosodiethanolamine (NDEA), a known and potent carcinogen.

DEA also appears to block absorption of the nutrient choline, vital to brain development.

Fragrance

Toluene, made from petroleum or coal tar, is found in most synthetic fragrances. Chronic exposure is linked to anemia, lowered blood cell count, liver or kidney damage, and may affect a developing fetus.

Synthetic fragrances can also be drying and irritating to your skin.

Triclosan

The antibacterial agent added to many liquid hand soaps to help kill germs. Triclosan is suspected of contributing to the growing problem of antibiotic resistance.