

Green and gorgeous

Simple tips to keep your home toxic-free BY LEENA EL ABBAS



THE BATHROOM IS OFTEN REGARDED AS A SANCTUARY OF THE FAMILY HOME; UNFORTUNATELY, THE AVERAGE BATHROOM HAS BECOME A HAVEN OF CHEMICAL EXPOSURE,

housing a variety of personal care products that may be harmful to your health. To date, 89 percent of the 10,500 ingredients used in personal care products have not been evaluated for safety by the Food and Drug Administration. Of particular concern are ingredients such as phthalates, parabens, formaldehyde, mercury, and even some pesticides that are showing up in a variety of personal care product formulas. Many of them have been linked to health scares, including cancer and gender disruption.

We absorb about 60 percent of what we put on our skin and the average woman comes into contact with as many as 175 different chemicals from the beauty products she uses every day.

The good news is that you don't have to give up washing your hair or smelling good in order to protect your health and be nice to the planet. There are safe, non-toxic alternatives to virtually every personal care product you and your family need. Here's how to look and feel clean and beautiful without indulging in the chemical cocktail.

READ THE LABELS: Put down any product that contains phthalates, mercury, toluene, lead, formaldehyde, petroleum distillates, parabens or BHA. These chemicals are considered the most detrimental to human and environmental health.

USE A LITTLE LESS: Do you really need all of those beauty products in your cabinet? For each product you eliminate, you'll save money and reduce the chemicals in your body and in the environment.

BE KIND TO ANIMALS: Animal testing is unnecessary, unethical, and just plain cruel. Look for the "Leaping Bunny" label to make sure your beauty products are "cruelty-free." This symbol, created by The Coalition For Consumer Information On Cosmetics, is the only international standard for personal care products indicating that they have not been tested on animals.

DON'T LEAVE A CARBON FOOTPRINT ON YOUR FACE:

Petroleum derivatives are found in a surprising number of personal care products, such as lip balms, lotions, and lubricants, as well as the plastics used in sanitary products. Avoid products that use petroleum or its derivatives and look for alternatives, such as beeswax, cocoa butter, and vegetable oils.



GO ORGANIC: Go organic yes, but be cautious. Manufacturers are not legally required to obtain organic certification to make organic claims. Make sure the products you buy carry the logos of either the Soil Association, Ecocert or USDA Organic. These products contain ingredients that are assessed to be safe to human health and guarantee that their manufacture and use causes minimal environmental impact. By using certified organic beauty products, you will ensure you will not be coming into contact with synthetic fragrances and colors. Different certifiers have different organic standards, so it's worth checking who allows what ingredients. Buy organic products of really good quality so that green living becomes a pleasure, not a chore.

REDUCE, REUSE AND RECYCLE: Reduce by using less products. Buy one mild cleanser to use on the body and hair; use flower hydrosols as toners; use a toxic-free

sunscreen in summer, and don't be afraid to use facial moisturizer around your eyes! Re-use kitchen staples and leftovers to make express beauty treatments, as well as empty jars, vials, and bottles for your homemade beauty products.

BE SELFISH: There are two types of green – green as good for your health, and green as good for our planet. Some beauty products may be made in a factory that is powered by solar panels and still contain paraben preservatives and artificial fragrances. When choosing a beauty product, put your health first and the health of the planet will follow. By a wonderful coincidence, beauty products that are truly good for our health are kind to the environment, too.

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