

# Chemical Calories for Your Skin??



What's in your  
face cream?

Did I get your attention? Good – because what you put on your body deserves as much attention as what you put in your mouth. The Food and Drug Administration monitors what we ingest through our mouth, but they haven't yet accepted the fact that our skin soaks in chemicals and toxins, too.

While we don't know for sure, many have suggested that through our skin, the body's largest organ, we soak in calories from the products we use on our face and body. A recent study by researchers from the Children's Environmental Health Center at [New York's Mount Sinai Medical Center](#) identified an association between exposure to phthalates (found in personal care products, among other things) and obesity in young children – including increased body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference.

It is impossible to totally avoid the synthetic chemicals we breathe and those we come in contact with in public. But we can minimize our toxic load by paying close attention when selecting products for our faces, hair and bodies, as well as our homes and yards.

Most people want to trust that [if a product is on the market it must be safe](#). Along the same line of thinking is the idea

that our skin is a barrier that can protect us from harmful substances. Neither of these assumptions is correct. Unsafe compounds are being used and they are soaking in. And the efficacy of a product does not have to be proven so advertising can claim just about anything with regard to how it will make your skin and hair feel and look.

The regulatory authority's stance in this country is that chemicals are safe until proven harmful. [Eighty-nine percent of all ingredients in cosmetics have not been evaluated for safety by any publicly accountable institution.](#) Sounds like we've been relegated to guinea pig status to me. By themselves, many of the compounds in personal care products have been identified as irritants, toxins, mutagens (damage DNA), teratogens (birth defects) and potential carcinogens (I think you know what that means) . We may be told the amounts are so small there's no way they can harm us, but how many products are we using? What is the effect of mixtures of different compounds in the same products – or mixed with ingredients from other products? No one knows.

We have all the environmental toxins we're dealing with, then we use small amounts of several personal care products, with unknown long-term effects and unknown synergistic effects. Scary.

What can we do? [Read labels on everything that touches your skin and hair.](#) Buy only products that are natural (vs. synthetic) and organic. Every dollar is a vote in a sense. Can you pronounce every ingredient? Is it a chemical name (dimethicone, sodium laureth sulfate, PEG-50 Almond Glyceride) or is it something you understand (like organic aloe vera and organic shea butter)? Is the word "fragrance" on the label? What exactly is in that?

Does the product have colorings? Are you aware of how many food colorings were once listed as safe but then removed from that list after they were found to cause cancer, behavior

problems and other issues? At least 18. This is after we were eating them for years.

Parabens have for decades been used as an acceptable and safe preservative. Why then are many products coming out touting the fact they are "paraben-free"? Did you know methyl paraben is a xenoestrogen and has been found in 90% of breast cancer tumors tested?

There are products with integrity out there. The coconut oil I encourage people to consume everyday is a wonderful, pure, low cost moisturizer for skin and hair. Yes, it's a bit greasy and can get on your clothes. During the summer, though, it's great for bare legs and arms. I don't recommend it for your face at all if you're prone to oily skin. I choose to use Brittanie's Thyme for my face, which is made in lovely Cedar Springs, Michigan. Their products are certified to food standards, so they can be eaten (and are safe).

Other organic brands are coming onto the market all the time (some wonderful, some deceptive). You can find recipes online to make your own. Do your homework, get used to reading labels, maybe switch one product a month. Please be aware. We've got to watch out for ourselves – and each other.

Until next time...wishing you Real Food (even for your skin) for Real Health so you can be Real Happy.