



PERSONAL HYGIENE & BEAUTY PRODUCTS

Many beauty and personal hygiene products have an impact on the environment as they contain ingredients that are extremely hazardous and depending on the product's packaging (such as aerosols) the disposal of left over product or the empty packaging can also cause concern and place these products in the hazardous waste category.

Looking at the ingredients list on beauty and hygiene products will give a clear indication of the range of hazardous materials it contains. Examples include dibutyl phthalate, or DBP, which is found in nail polish, acrylamide, formaldehyde and ethylene oxide found in products such as hair colour and bleaching products, hair relaxer, nail treatments and skin lightening products.

Even lipstick is a cause for concern as it contains man-made oils, synthetic colors and petroleum based waxes.

Being more aware of the chemicals used in the production of cosmetics is a starting point. To reduce the impact of these hazardous materials on the environment make sure you use them wisely:

- Purchase only what you need,
- Store products correctly: out of direct sunlight, with the lid firmly on,
- Dispose of empty packaging and/or product properly by using your local Civic Amenity Centre

Ask your retailer about earth-friendly brands or greener alternatives and

consider switching to these: they may also be better for your skin, nails and hair.

Hairsprays, deodorants & other aerosols:

Most people are aware that Chloro Fluoro Carbon's (CFC's) were the main ingredient in aerosol propellants, until it was discovered that their use was adding to the depletion of the ozone layer and these products were gradually phased out during the 1980's.

The additives in aerosols which are now attracting the most concern are volatile organic compounds or VOCs. These are colourless, tasteless chemicals which easily vaporize at room temperature and are found in many indoor aerosol products including air fresheners, furniture polishes, cleaning and personal hygiene products.

There are a wide variety of VOCs – some which are odourless and some which have a sharp chemical smell. So it's not possible to identify whether the product





you are purchasing contains VOCs by odour alone. Instead take a careful look at the label to see what ingredients it contains before you make your purchase. Researchers have also been studying the effect of using more than one aerosol product in the home and concerns have been raised about the combined effects on health through the build-up of VOCs in the home.

It is thought that pregnant women and very young children are most vulnerable to health risks from VOCs as well as other 'at risk' groups such as the ill and the elderly.

Although VOCs were thought to be a better alternative to CFCs, they still contribute to ozone depletion in the stratosphere as well as global warming as they can react with nitrogen oxides in polluted air which leads to the creation of 'bad' ozone at ground level.

Pump hair spray is definitely a better alternative to aerosol hair spray. Aerosol hair spray is appearing less and less on store shelves these days but if you have some at home, be sure to use it up before recycling the packaging.

Why not switch to a green alternative or have a go at making your own hair spray? It's cheap and easy:

Home Made Hair Spray

Place a sliced lemon into two cups of boiling water. Cool this and leave it in the refrigerator. Add one ounce of rubbing

alcohol, use a clean empty spray bottle to store it, it should last for up to 2 weeks outside of the refrigerator. Making your own hair spray is a great way for you to ensure that you aren't exposing yourself or the planet to unnecessary toxins for the sake of your hair.

Deodorant and antiperspirant – What's the difference

Surprisingly there is a difference between the two: antiperspirants reduce or eliminate sweating while deodorants mask or mitigate odors generated when we sweat. However both are packed with chemicals; let's have a look at some of these ingredients:

Most commercial antiperspirants contain aluminium in some form - it's the active ingredient to help reduce sweating. There are health concerns about the affects of absorbing aluminum.

Other ingredients include triclosan which is a powerful anti-bacterial agent that cannot be filtered out during waste water treatment and of course, that's where most of it ends up. As triclosan is toxic to algae, it can be a threat in waterways in terms of reducing food sources for creatures dependent on algae.

These are just two components of antiperspirants and deodorants that are cause



for concern. If you take a look at the ingredients label of your own deodorant, it will probably read like a laboratory shopping list.

All things considered, deodorants and antiperspirants do have quite an environmental impact.

So what to do?

For many of us who can't/won't go without mainstream commercial antiperspirants and deodorants, here are a few tips to reducing their impact:

Frequency - do you really need to use deodorants every day? For example, if you're not going to be out and about one day, perhaps this can be a deodorant free day. Even if you can reduce use by one day a week, that's close to a 15% overall reduction.

Overkill - some people use deodorants multiple times a day – is this really necessary? Try to spray/roll/splash only once a day if possible and just a quick spritz rather than bathing in the stuff. Remember that our sense of smell will become dulled to the fragrance if we use it all the time, leading us to think we need more.

Chemicals - compare between brands and research those mysterious ingredients. Go for the lesser of the evils and definitely try to avoid products with triclosan.

Packaging – Where possible avoid aerosols: pump sprays and sticks are a

better way to go, especially if these are in packaging that can be recycled.

As with many aspects of going green, these tips not only reduce environmental impact, but can also save you money too!

