

# Personal Care Products

Understanding everyday toxicants and how you can minimize your exposure



## Additional Resources

Learn more about the chemicals in your everyday products and environment:

**The Environmental Working Group:** [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)

**Explore our website:**  
[www.seed-program.org](http://www.seed-program.org)

**Contact & Follow us:**  
[SEED@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:SEED@hsph.harvard.edu)  
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[@drmesserlian](https://twitter.com/drmesserlian)



SCIENTIFIC EARLY LIFE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



**HARVARD T.H. CHAN**  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

## How can I minimize my exposure?



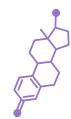
- Replace cosmetics with safer alternatives that are phthalate-, phenol-, and chemical-free
- Avoid chemical UV filters in daily moisturizers and use mineral-based sunscreens
- Try natural fragrance-free moisturizing agents (e.g., oils)
- Avoid hair sprays, dyes, plastic styling devices, and scented hair products (e.g., gels)
- Minimize use of perfume, cologne, candles, fresheners, and incense
- Use simple cleaning supplies and soaps; shop organic and read ingredient labels
- Look for these labels:



# EDCs

Endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) interrupt normal hormonal activity by mimicking, blocking, or altering hormones and changing the way that they function in the body.

EDCs include phthalates, phenols, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and other toxicants. Some EDCs are rapidly removed from the body, while others can remain in the body for a long time. Most people are exposed to multiple EDCs daily, allowing these chemicals to remain at harmful concentrations.



# These chemicals are harmful

Current research suggests that EDCs, including PFAS, can lead to adverse health effects such as:

- ✗ Increases risk of reproductive disorders and adverse birth outcomes
- ✗ Impairs neurodevelopment
- ✗ Alters immune function
- ✗ Increases cancers risk
- ✗ Alters metabolic function



One of the most common routes to EDC exposure is dermal absorption. Personal care products that are left on the skin, such as lotion, tend to contribute the most to internal concentrations. Replacing harmful products with healthier alternatives is key!

## Which personal care products typically contain EDCs?



Cosmetics and makeup remover



Perfume, cologne, and other fragrances



Nail polish, nail polish remover, and acrylics



Scented lotion, facial moisturizers, and sunscreen



Antibacterial and antimicrobial soaps; cleaning supplies



Shaving creams and razors



Toothpaste, floss, and other dental products



Hairspray and hair products (e.g., gels, shampoo, dye)