



# Hair Color

## HOW CAN CHEMICALS IN HAIR COLOR GET INTO YOUR BODY?

### Skin and Eye Contact

- Some chemicals may harm your skin directly and/or be absorbed into your bloodstream.
- You may splash chemicals into your eyes.
- You may accidentally touch your eyes with chemicals on your hands.
- Chemical vapors in the air may get into your eyes.

### Breathing

- You may breathe in chemical vapors through your nose or mouth.

### Swallowing

- Chemicals on your hands or in the air may contaminate your food or drink.

## HOW CAN CHEMICALS IN HAIR COLOR AFFECT YOUR BODY?

Different chemicals affect your body in different ways, depending on the *amount* of the chemical in the product, how *harmful* it is, the *length of time* you are exposed, and other factors. Not every person has the same reaction to a chemical. Some people experience health effects when they work with a product, others never do. Health problems that may be caused by chemicals in hair color include:

**Central nervous system effects:** Headache, dizziness, nausea, drowsiness, restlessness.

**Allergies:** Stuffy or runny nose, sneezing, asthma, dermatitis. Sometimes chemicals from other products, such as thioglycolates in perm solutions or relaxers, can make you more likely to have an allergic reaction to chemicals in hair colorings.

**Skin irritation and dermatitis:** Redness, itching, skin rash, or dry skin that cracks and flakes — most common on the hands and arms.

**Lead poisoning:** Some hair coloring products contain lead. If you are exposed to a large amount of lead, you may be at risk of lead poisoning. Symptoms include muscle weakness, leg cramps, numbness, depression, and brain damage. This is not a common health problem.

**Eye irritation, eye damage, and blindness:** Redness, burning, watering, itching, loss of sight.

**Nose and throat irritation:** Runny nose, scratchy throat, burning, itching.

**Lung irritation:** Breathing difficulty, shortness of breath, coughing, swelling of lung tissue.

**Burns:** Chemicals in some hair colorings can cause burns if they get on your skin or in your eyes.

**Cancer:** Coal tar dyes, used in some permanent hair colorings, have been shown to cause cancer if you work with them over a long period of time. This is not a common health problem.

## What harmful chemicals are sometimes found in hair color?

### WARNING! EXPOSURE TO THESE CHEMICALS MAY CAUSE:

**Alcohol (ethyl, isopropyl, or propyl):** Eye, nose, throat, and lung irritation. Central nervous system effects. Skin irritation and dermatitis.

**Aminophenols:** Eye, nose, and throat irritation. Skin irritation and dermatitis. Severe allergic reaction in some people.

**Ammonium hydroxide:** Eye, nose, throat, and lung irritation. Skin and eye burns. Skin irritation and dermatitis.

**Coal tar dyes (aniline derivatives) such as 4-methoxy-m-phenylenediamine (4-MMPD), paraphenylenediamine, 2-nitro-phenylenediamine, 2, 4-diaminoaniside, and 2, 4-diaminoaniside sulfate:**

Severe eye irritation and blindness. Skin irritation and dermatitis. Severe allergic reaction in some people. Cancer if absorbed through the skin during long-term use. The FDA recommends that

products with coal tar dyes carry warning labels, but the labels don't mention cancer.

**Hydrogen peroxide:** Eye, nose, throat, and lung irritation. Skin and eye burns. Severe irritation of mouth, throat, and stomach if swallowed.

**Lead acetate:** Lead poisoning if absorbed in large amounts.

**Paraphenylenediamine:** Skin irritation, dermatitis.

Not all hair color contains these chemicals, and some may contain harmful chemicals not listed above. Always check the product's Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for more information.

## HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF FROM CHEMICAL HAZARDS?

When you work around chemicals in hair colorings, it is important to take steps to protect your health.

### Avoid harmful chemicals

- Don't use products that contain coal tar dyes or lead acetate.
- Use hair coloring products that are less harmful, like henna or another vegetable coloring.
- For any product used, read the label and Safety Data Sheet to know what is in the product and its health effects.

### Use safe work practices

- Alternate between using vegetable colorings and semi-permanent colors.
- Keep containers closed when you're not using them so the product doesn't spill or get into the air.
- Check that all containers of chemicals are properly labeled of their contents.
- Don't eat or drink in your work area as your food or drink may get contaminated.
- Wash your hands after working with chemicals, even if you wore gloves.

### Ventilate the room

- Always work in a well-ventilated area. If there's no ventilation system, open windows and doors to bring in fresh air from outside.

### Use protective equipment

- Wear gloves designed to protect your skin from the particular chemicals you're using.
- Wear safety goggles when mixing chemicals to protect your eyes from splashes.

### Know your rights as a worker

- Employers must provide workers with Safety Data Sheets if requested.
- Employers must train workers on the hazards of the chemicals they are working with and how to protect themselves from the hazards.

### Report any health problems

- Speak up if you are experiencing symptoms of health effects so your employer can help alleviate the problem and let other employees know.
- Seek advice from your doctor on how serious your issues are and how they should be handled.
- You have the right to report health hazards to Cal/OSHA by filing a complaint.

