

How do the plastics that are used for cosmetic skin cream containers affect our skin?

All our recent blog posts are concentrating on the uses of plastics, the harmful chemicals in them and how they affect the human health. The previous two articles focused on dermal absorption and how skincare containers and products release chemicals that get absorbed by the skin and enter the blood stream.

Here is a little recap from the blogs with Plastics as the main subject, to help you acquire a better understanding about the effects of skin cream containers. We learned in the previous blog posts that plastics are one of the best alternatives for glass. They are flexible, transparent, and resistant to breakage and shattering.

The one disadvantage of using plastics in container bottles and boxes is that some of the most common plastics are made out of harmful chemicals like BPA and Phthalates. With continual use of these containers and due to the temperature differences they are exposed to, the harmful chemicals could start leeching in the contents of the container. Once the contents are absorbed, ingested or inhaled by the consumer, the chemicals enter the body and disrupt bodily functions.

The former article taught us that dermal absorption is more harmful than ingestion. Which makes us wonder what cosmetic skin care containers are made out of and what would happen if these containers released harmful chemicals into the product itself. If the skincare containers are made out of plastics with harmful chemicals in them, then yes, the chemicals will interact with the contents and will eventually transfer on the consumer's skin. Once on the skin, they will penetrate the skin and get absorbed in the blood stream.

However, you do not need to worry much. The regulating authorities like FDA has labeled cosmetics as adulterated if their container is composed of harmful chemicals.¹ Therefore, most of the cosmetic companies pack their products in glass containers or plastic #5 containers. Plastic #5 is made out of polypropylene and is considered safer for use.² Moreover, these plastics can be recycled easily. In case there are no recycling opportunities available for consumers and to encourage recycling, elite companies like Origins, MAC and Aveda offer their consumers free offers on their products when a consumer returns them empty containers for recycling.³ Other brands like L’Oreal offer their products in glass jars usually. Although, they are bulky, prone to shattering if dropped and heavier to carry, they are the safest option.

There are a lot of authorities and laws out there to regulate the packaging of the cosmetic products. To date, many have successfully banned the plastics containing potentially harmful substances. Nevertheless, many small companies still use such containers. It is your responsibility to check before buying from them, and do check the packaging label. All plastics have a code number. Number 2, 4 and 5 are the safest to use while 3 and 6 should be avoided at all costs.

We have dealt with the harmful effects of cosmetic containers through dermal absorption. What is next is being wary of the ingredients of the product itself. The upcoming blog post will deal with toxic chemicals in cosmetics and beauty products.

¹ FDA Cosmetics Handbook. Grimes & Reece PLLC. <http://www.mlmlaw.com/library/guides/fda/Coshdbok.htm>. Accessed 8 November 2013.

² Safe Plastics Numbers Guide. BABY green thumb, <http://www.babygreenthumb.com/p-122-safe-plastic-numbers-guide.aspx>. Accessed 8 November 2013.

³ 360: Cosmetics. Earth 911, <http://earth911.com/news/2009/09/07/360-cosmetics/>. Accessed 8 November 2013.