

saving

Organic and natural personal care products are in growing demand. Here's what's behind the trend, and what you should know

by Stacy Malkan

face

We've been reading food labels for years to rule out those with unhealthy ingredients. Now, we're doing the same with personal care products. Concerned about added chemicals suspected of causing major health problems, consumers in record numbers are choosing lipsticks, body lotions, and shampoos they consider pure or healthy.

If your family is considering a makeover, be aware that not every product marked organic or natural is 100 percent free of unwanted additives. To separate fact from fiction, try these suggestions:

- Look for the seal. Only those products marked "100 percent organic" with the USDA Organic Seal are purported to be completely organic.
- Learn your labels. Many products marked "gentle," "mild," or "unscented" contain irritants and questionable ingredients. Consider all-natural makeup (see sidebar), which you can usually find at your local health food store.
- Keep it simple. As a general rule, the shorter the ingredients list, the better. Choose products with ingredients you recognize (like lavender essential oils instead of "fragrance"). Avoid neon colors and strong, artificial scents.
- Know your products. One place to start: the Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep Database (cosmeticdatabase.org). It's an invaluable tool for identifying safe products and those you may want to trash.
- Take a stand. Join the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics (safecosmetics.org). It's working to pass state and federal laws to improve the safety standards of all personal care goods. Cosmetics are the FDA's least regulated products; as long as companies are not required to safety-test or fully list ingredients, we'll have a hard time making the best choices.
- Keep up-to-date. Read the science and health sections of major publications regularly to stay informed on important consumer safety issues. Sign up for the Environmental Working Group's newsletter (ewg.org) for regular updates. **P&C**



a healthy glow

Stock your makeup drawer with these all-natural beauties

Eye shadow: Coastal Classic Creations, \$12 each

Glitter: Shimmer Dust, Zosimos Botanicals, \$18

Lipstick: Lip Crème, Miessence, \$27

Mascara: PureBrow Fix & Mascara, Jane Iredale, \$20

Nail polish: WaterColors nonpeel-off polish, Honeybee Gardens, \$7

Stacy Malkan is the author of the award-winning book *Not Just a Pretty Face: The Ugly Side of the Beauty Industry*. Read Stacy's blog at notjustaprettyface.org.