

Are Foam and Bath Bubbles Worth Poor Health?

The Truth About Sodium Lauryl Sulphate

Check the labels of your shampoo, soap, facial cleanser, shaving cream, body wash, or shower gel: Do you see either Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS) or Sodium Laureth Sulfate (SLES) listed? Or one of their cousins: Ammonium Lauryl Sulfate, Sodium Myreth Sulfate, etc.? Most manufacturers use these anionic detergents because they produce a lot of foam very inexpensively. But SLS is so strong that it's also used to scrub garage floors. Worse, it has been proven to cause cancer in the long run. And the American College of Toxicology says SLS stays in the body up to five days. Other studies show it easily penetrates the skin and enters and maintains residual levels in the heart, liver, the lungs, and the brain. Yet SLS is found in most cleansing, foaming products—even in some toothpaste! (Note: SLS may be disguised in pseudo-natural cosmetics with the parenthetical explanation "comes from coconut." Let's save the coconut from defamation of character!)

One woman who examined labels found that all the shampoos she checked had SLS—even health food store brands. Many listed Sodium Laureth Sulfate as the first ingredient on the label, meaning it's the single most prevalent ingredient. So this lady called one company to complain that their product contains a substance that will cause people to have cancer. Their response was, "Yeah, we knew about it, but there's nothing we can do about it because we need that substance to produce foam."

Try contacting some manufacturers yourself: The typical responses might be:

- (1) Denial: "It's completely safe."
- (2) Avoidance: "You'll have to talk to someone else" or "We can't talk about that."
- (3) Ignorance: "I've never heard about that."

Most people selling products with this and other harmful ingredients really just don't know. The FDA has a GRAS list (Generally Regarded As Safe), and almost everything is on there, so most people selling these products just focus on the marketing hype and what the product is supposed to do for skin (clean it, make it feel soft, etc.). Sadly, of the 7000 ingredients used on the skin, only 5-6 have been tested for LONG-TERM safety, and none have been tested TOGETHER. Currently, 125 are strongly suspected carcinogens, 20 cause adverse nervous system reactions, and 25 are connected to birth defects.

So why exactly is SLS so bad?

What tests show about Sodium Lauryl Sulfate:

- (1) SLS PENETRATES EYES AND TISSUES. Tests show that SLS can penetrate into the eyes as well as systemic tissues (brain, heart, liver, etc.) and shows long-term retention in those tissues. Especially when used in soaps and shampoos, there is an

immediate concern relating to the penetration of SLS into the eyes and other tissues. This is especially important in infants, where considerable growth is occurring, because a much greater uptake occurs by tissues of younger eyes, and SLS changes the amounts of some proteins in cells from eye tissues. Tissues of young eyes may be more susceptible to alteration by SLS. [1]

(2) SLS FORMS NITRATES: When SLS is used in shampoos and cleansers containing nitrogen-based ingredients, it can form carcinogenic nitrates that can enter the blood stream in large numbers. They can cause eye irritations, skin rashes, hair loss, scalp scurf similar to dandruff, and allergic reactions. [2]

(3) SLS PRODUCES NITROSAMINES (potent carcinogens that cause the body to absorb nitrates at higher levels than eating nitrate-contaminated food like hot dogs or lunch meat): Dr. David H. Fine, the chemist who uncovered NDELA contamination in cosmetics, estimates that a person would be applying 50 to 100 micrograms of nitrosamine to the skin each time he or she used a nitrosamine-contaminated cosmetic. By comparison, a person consuming sodium nitrate-preserved bacon is exposed to less than one microgram of nitrosamine. [3]

(4) SLS STRIPS MOISTURE AND OIL FROM THE SKIN. According to the Journal of Investigative Dermatology, SLS produced skin and hair damage, including cracking and severe inflammation of the derma-epidermal tissue. Skin layers may separate and inflame due to its protein-denaturing properties. [4]

(5) SLS IRRITATES SCALP AND MAY PROMOTE HAIR LOSS. [5]

(6) SLS CAN DAMAGE DNA IN CELLS—according to Japanese studies. [6]

CONCLUSION:

SLS and all its cousins are very harsh detergents that strip the skin's moisture barrier (which is linked to immunity and skin health) and causes serious health problems during testing on animals. It is linked to harming children's eyes, denaturing protein (thereby possibly contributing to hair loss or thinning), and combines with DEA, MEA and TEA (often found in the same shampoo) to form nitrosamines, a potent carcinogen. Since it is only included in products because of its potent foaming action, the question you must consider is:

What's more important: the foam or your health?

References for above information:

- [1] Green, Dr. Keith. Detergent Penetration into Young and Adult Eyes Department of Ophthalmology Medical College of GA, Augusta GA
- [2] Hampton, Aubrey. Dictionary of Cosmetic Ingredients. Organica Press Metarasso, or Hampton, Aubrey. Natural Organic Hair and Skin Care. Organica Press, Tampa FL
- [3] *ibid.*

- [4] Journal of Invest. Dermatology, 32-581, 1959 "Denaturation of Epidermal Keratin by Surface Active Agents"
- [5]Wright, Camille S. Shampoo Report. Images International, Inc. 1989
- [6]Vance, Judi. Beauty to Die For. Promotion Publishing, San Diego, CA 1998. Page 23.