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TAME YOUR TOXINS

Now that my body and I were approaching the healthiest healthy phase of our relationship, I worried about what else it might be encountering. What's the good in treating your bod like a temple if you're plastering it with garbage?

I'm not one of those girly glowers who walks out of the gym with a dewy sheen. (What *is* their secret?) I schvitz . . . a lot. These days, I don't care about it, but, back in my mid-20s, a national tour of *Monty Python* songs and sketches (with Eric Idle!) required me to wear a skintight lavender bodysuit. Nowhere for sweat to hide. To keep that embarrassing, stain-making, pit pouring under control, prescription-strength antiperspirant lined my luggage. I slicked on so much aluminum chloride—the active ingredient in most antiperspirants—that my underarms became red and swollen. Pretty. But, heck, I was the only girl onstage without pit stains! Aluminum-based brands became my secret weapon for years.

Years later, with a TV career in full swing, my on-camera look required

bulletproof makeup and hair, and achieving that I-did-NOT-wake-up-like-this look included shellacking my face and spraying my hair solid. Fast-forward to my cancer diagnosis and my search for how it could have happened. Let me tell you, lemonade or no lemonade, I didn't want to part with any of the pretties in my beauty bag—even if they were serving up unhealthy





bitterness. Then something unexpected happened. So many breast cancer survivors asked if I had stopped using aluminum-based deodorants.

Um, nope. Why?

Turns out a lot of researchers think there could be a connection between your BO-stopper and breast cancer. According to the National Cancer Institute, there's no nail-in-the-coffin study saying the aluminum in your antiperspirant is *definitely* going to increase your risk of finding a lump, but studies have found that a disproportionately large number of breast

cancers occur near the armpit, which has put scientists on alert.¹ The theory goes that aluminum on your underarms seeps through the skin and into breast tissue, where it potentially has estrogenlike effects—meaning cancer precursors.² The idea that my heavy-duty deodorant might have played even a small role in my encounter with the big C woke me up. How could something seemingly harmless enough to go on your skin daily be so potentially dangerous?

Back in the makeup chair at *Entertainment Tonight*, returning as

a cancer survivor after a three-year hiatus, I started paying attention to my glammed-up TV look for more than just pro tips on applying shadow and keeping the contouring classy. The gorgeous glow from all those pricey highlighters and foundations sinking into my skin suddenly gave me a sinking feeling.

Turns out the average woman uses 168 chemicals on her skin every single day, so what other dangers were lurking in the medicine cabinet?³ What about under the sink and in my home? I had detoxed my life from plate to push-ups, and then it dawned on me that what we put on and around our bodies matters just as much as what goes in them. It was time for a total toxin dump.

TOXIN DUMP 101

I'm not a chemist or an environmental scientist, so deferring to the scientists and experts made sense. After much Googling, I landed on a resource that's become my toxin-taming field guide and underlies many elements of this chapter: the Environmental Working Group, ewg.org.

They “empower people to live healthier lives in a healthier environment.” Can I get a “Hell, yeah!”? (P.S. I totally wish I could steal that tagline as the subtitle of this book.) The EWG is a not-for-profit, nonpartisan group. Their work focuses

exclusively on fielding questions with hugely impactful answers for your life, such as: “Is my deodorant going to give me cancer?”

Their publications aren't a bible for detoxing your life, but they come pretty damn close, which is why EWG's research and guides are the basis of so much of my personal journey and the advice here. The organization's stellar info, along with other guidelines in this chapter, will help you make the best choices possible on your journey to your healthiest healthy.

The EWG rates personal-care products on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the cleanest and 10 the most toxic. It's hard to shake that being a “perfect 10” is *not* desirable here, but that's the numerical rating system we'll use in this chapter. They give home products letter grades, “A” through “F,” as in high school. (I got mostly A's then, so why change that now?—*cough* brown-noser, I know.) Even as my toxin-tapering Torah, the EWG isn't omniscient. They can't rate every single product on the market. Plus, the score they assign to a product averages each individually rated ingredient. So use the charts in this chapter thoughtfully to double-check ingredients lists and make informed choices, my healthy friend.

PURGE THE PARABENS

When it comes to your skin, the top toxic target is fairly well known: parabens. Walk down any beauty aisle, and you'll see bottles and tubes proudly labeled "paraben-free." That said, a ton of products you use daily still contains them.



Parabens are endocrine disruptors, a class of chemicals that interferes with the hormone systems in your body. They chemically mimic estrogen and throw things out of whack to the tune of cancer, birth defects, and developmental disorders.⁴ Yeah, not good. According to the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics—which works with breast cancer research partners and is also a great resource—products with a high water content, such as shampoo and facial cleanser, commonly contain parabens.⁵

A 2015 study conducted by researchers at the University of California at Berkeley found that parabens might increase your breast cancer risk more than scientists originally thought. Most studies have tested the effects of parabens on cancer cells solo, but in real life other factors come into

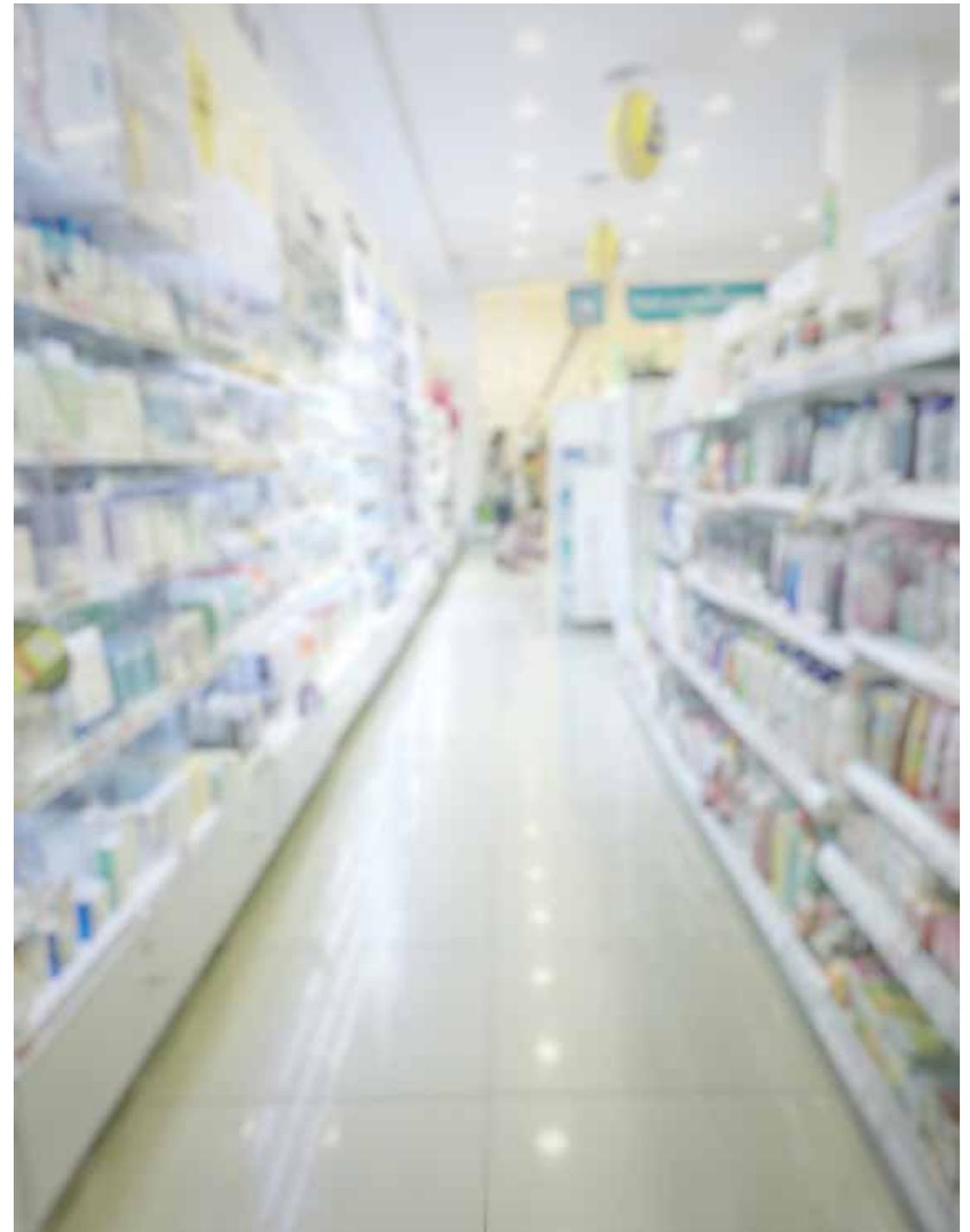
play, such as growth hormones that occur naturally in your body. After testing the effects of parabens on breast cancer cells with different types of hormone receptors, researchers found that, when combined with a growth factor naturally found in your breast cells, it took just a measly 1 percent of the parabens to stimulate breast cancer growth. In laymen's terms: Parabens are *more* carcinogenic in real life than they are in the lab.⁶

Applying any product with parabens—lotion, sunscreen, foundation—can cause UV-induced damage to skin cells and screw with their growth rate.⁷ No bueno. Certain parabens also have been linked to reproductive issues in animal studies. One such study found that exposure to butylparaben while pregnant or breastfeeding could alter the development of reproductive organs in the child.⁸ Ack!

Given all these nasty side effects, it will shock you how many products still contain parabens—everything from your eye cream to your conditioner. Toss them all.

HEALTHY HACK

For some of the higher-end items that you can't bear to trash, vow to finish them and then make that the *last* time you buy them. Small steps!



THE KEEP-OFF-YOUR-BOD LIST

Ingredient	What It Is	Why It's Harmful
*Parabens, most common forms: methylparaben and propylparaben	Chemical compounds used as a preservative in everything from shampoos to lotions.	Linked to breast cancer, skin cancer, and reproductive issues.
*Phthalates⁹	Usually hidden under the catch-all term “fragrance” on ingredient labels, they’re in everything from conditioner to cosmetics. Toxins more often give the desired alluring smell of many products rather than, say, tuberose petals.	Linked to reproductive issues and early puberty. Experts worry that their endocrine-disrupting effects might play a role in breast cancer. Fragrances also can cause allergies and dermatitis.
Aluminum¹⁰	The active ingredient in many sweat-stoppers.	It’s a bioaccumulative neurotoxin that collects in fat cells and destroys nerve tissues; also linked to Alzheimer’s.
*Triclosan¹¹	Antibacterial ingredient found in hand sanitizers and liquid soaps. Classified by the government as a pesticide.	Endocrine disruptor specifically shown to interfere with the thyroid. Also helps cause bacterial resistance to broad-spectrum antibiotics.
Formaldehyde¹²—may also appear as DMDM hydantoin, imidazolidinyl urea, diazolidinyl urea, quaternium-15, bronopol, 5-bromo-5-nitro-1,3-dioxane, or hydroxymethylglycinate	Smelly stuff from anatomy class found in foundation, soap, nail polish, hair-straightening treatments, and other products.	Classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer and other agencies as a known human carcinogen.
1,4-dioxane¹³	A by-product of the process that makes certain skincare ingredients, such as petroleum, less irritating. This carcinogen is found in almost half of all cosmetics.	Linked to cancer and respiratory issues.
Polyethylene glycol (PEG)¹⁴	Often found in cleansers, conditioners, sunscreen, and moisturizers.	PEGs themselves aren’t that bad, though they have been shown to cause irritation. The worry is that they’re easily contaminated with ethylene oxide, a known carcinogen, and 1,4-dioxane, a possible carcinogen.

Ingredient	What It Is	Why It's Harmful
Products ending in –eth,¹⁵ such as cetareth and tricetareth	Typically found in anything that hydrates, including moisturizers or conditioners.	Similar to PEGs, these have a high risk of contamination by scarier ingredients.
Petroleum (mineral oil)¹⁶	Often found in moisturizers, petroleum jelly, and mineral oils.	Nontoxic when properly refined, they can be contaminated with PHAs, which are linked to breast cancer.
*Oxybenzone and octinoxate¹⁷	Active ingredient in synthetic chemical sunscreens.	Associated with photoallergic reactions, cardiovascular disease, and potential cell mutations.
Ethanolamines¹⁸ (MEA, DEA, TEA)	Used as pH balancers, this group of chemicals is found in hair dye, mascara, foundation, fragrances, sunscreens, and more.	These chemicals can collect on and in your body and are linked to cancer, allergies, and potential birth defects.
Coal tar¹⁹	A derivative of coal, this is used in synthetic dyes and as an antidandruff agent in hair care products.	Like coal, a known carcinogen—especially through skin exposure.
Talc²⁰	A mineral substance in everything from baby powder to shimmery eye shadow.	Linked to endometrial and ovarian cancer; also can be dangerous if inhaled.
Isobutane²¹	A propellant used in aerosol sprays.	A known carcinogen linked to reproductive issues; especially troublesome when inhaled.
*Phenoxyethanol²²	A preservative often used as an alternative to parabens. Sometimes also found in fragrances.	Classified by the European Union as an irritant and as potentially toxic in products used around the mouth.
Retinyl palmitate²³	A vitamin A derivative found in anti-aging products and acne fighters.	Linked to skin cancer and possible reproductive issues when those using it are exposed to the sun.

*An endocrine disruptor.

I know, I know—these chemicals are bad, but purging them all and finding healthy replacements are way too much work, right? Plus, you don't want to break up with your favorite brands. Raise your hand if you're tempted to blow off all this info. Not too long ago, my hand definitely would have gone up, too. Even as a health and wellness nut, I spent years brushing this stuff off as fringe science or hippie BS. The ills of skincare nasties have been known and publicized for a while, but when you use a product every day and everything still looks fine, it's *way* freakin' easier to ignore the info than to part with your beloved beauty balms.

I get it. I really do.

But get this. Scientists and other experts have *proven* the sometimes carcinogenic consequences of these products. Your eye shadow looks nice, yeah, but do you want it to help turn you into a statistic? If you haven't been through the cancer shitshow, thank goodness for you, and let's keep it that way, my healthy friend! As hard as it is, taking these small steps is totally worth it. Do it one product at a time.

REQUIRE REGULATION

The more research I did on the overwhelming world of toxins, endocrine disruptors, and hormone inhibitors, the more it became clear that regulatory

agencies don't have the power or money to keep these toxins out of the products we trust—and big corporations have too much money-hungry power. The federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, the final word on consumer-product regulations in America, hasn't been updated substantially since 1938. Seriously!

To give you an idea of how screwed up that is, right now the FDA bans or restricts only 11 chemicals in products sold in the USA. Compare that to the European Union, which has banned more than 1,300 chemicals and restricted almost 300 more.²⁴ In 2015, Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-California) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) cosponsored a bill called the Personal Care Products Safety Act, designed to make some much-needed twenty-first-century updates to regulatory standards. The bill would:

- * Require the FDA to develop and implement cosmetic manufacturing standards consistent with existing national and international standards.
- * Require cosmetics companies to allow the FDA to inspect their cosmetic safety records.
- * Require the FDA to recall cosmetics likely to cause serious adverse health consequences, such as cancer or birth defects.
- * Encourage the cosmetics industry

to use safety testing practices that minimize contamination.

But the bill is still stuck in Congress, which unfortunately means that you can't

trust regulatory agencies to have your back here, so be your own advocate and step up to the plate when it comes to protecting your bod!

