

Parabens In Skincare

When I originally formulated products I worried about preservatives because they have a tendency to irritate skin and Environ® made it's mark in the cosmetic world by manufacturing products without any preservatives such as the parabens, phenoxyethanol etc. We are extremely proud to run a factory with a compounding department of such highly sanitised systems that would easily equate to an operating theatre. Because of these standards we can maintain our original claim of never adding preservatives to the bulk of our products. More observant people may, however, have noticed a contradiction in our declaration of ingredients: to their dismay they may have discovered that some of their favourite products now contain parabens, etc.

Many people have phoned up to ask why we have changed our formula and abandoned our original philosophy on parabens. The truth is that we have not changed our formulae and we will never abandon our philosophy of never adding preservatives to our products unless it is absolutely necessary. What has changed are the laws in Europe governing the declaration of ingredients. COLIPA is the governing agency for the whole of the European Union and they have now decided that every ingredient used to make every raw material used in cosmetics has to be declared. This has effectively compelled the raw material manufacturers to declare the special ingredients that they use to make their products. If their product requires preservation from degradation, they may use parabens or other preservatives.

Let me illustrate what happens by citing our experience with just one of the raw materials (substance A) that we use for making certain products in the Environ® range. In Substance A" the concentration of parabens is 0.04 mg % and we use 5% of this raw material in our products.- that means that in our product we will automatically have 0.002 mg% which is a negligible amount of parabens and far below it's effective concentration and very much below the level that might cause skin irritation. However, we are compelled to declare it as an ingredient of our product even though we never added it into the product.

The same is true for other ingredients such as corn starch oil, and other ingredients that have suddenly appeared in our list of ingredients. One of our products, which originally had a relatively simple declaration of about 12 raw ingredients, now has a declaration of about 45 ingredients.

While we are on the subject of parabens I should take this opportunity to point out that the hype about parabens originates from people who do not understand enough about chemistry. Arendt and Schiller were two scientists who were awarded the Nobel Prize for their work to validate the ideas of Paracelsus that there were no poisonous chemicals, only poisonous doses. Similarly there are no safe chemicals, only safe doses of those chemicals. Parabens are mistakenly thought to be synthetic molecules, but in fact they are natural

components of a vast number of fruits and vegetables. As a result, if we eat fruit and vegetables, we virtually cannot avoid parabens in our diet. Strawberries naturally contain parabens and these parabens help to naturally preserve the fruit. The more resistant the fruit is to pests and decay, the more natural pesticides and preservatives it will have in it. Bruce Ames has pointed out that while we worry about synthetic pesticides, when he examined fruit that had been sprayed, he found that synthetic pesticides were at fractional doses compared to the natural pesticides in the fruit. No one has studied exactly how that impinges on our lives, but there is a suggestion that many of these natural pesticides are carcinogenic. Again we have to know whether they are present in toxic doses or not according to the Arendt-Schiller Law. One thing we can be certain of: botanical products that have not been highly refined will contain these pesticides as well as parabens.

I know that fearmongers have raised the questions as to whether parabens could cause breast cancer in order to explain why parabens are found in breast cancer, which is more common in the outer-upper quadrant of the breast. They reason that the use of under-arm deodorants, which generally contain parabens, results in more parabens in that region of the body and that the parabens might be the cause of the breast cancer. I wish they read more about the history of breast cancer because they would have discovered that breast cancer was more common in the upper outer quadrant of the breast according to a report in about 1850. I don't think parabens were being used in those days and I doubt that anyone used any deodorants commonly used today. The fact that breast cancers contain parabens might only reflect how many strawberries and other fruits the patient ate and they might be there coincidentally and have nothing to do with cancer induction. Even monstrous doses of parabens have not induced cancers in cell cultures. However, parabens and other preservatives do cause skin irritation and that's why I won't use them in formulating Environ® products unless the formula can only be protected by adding them.