

Michele,

>

>Hopefully, this isn't too technical. I tried to break it down as much as I could.

>

>Parabens are used commercially as preservatives... preservatives that are essential to keeping products safe for consumers to use (mostly for bacterial & fungal reasons). Although some parabens can be found naturally in plant sources, like blueberries, they are synthetically produced for consumer products; synthetically produced, but IDENTICAL in structure. Parabens have been considered safe for use due to their long history and low toxicity. They are quickly absorbed, metabolized and excreted by the body. It's our body's metabolization of these parabens that makes scientists believe they are non-toxic, as well as the low levels that are actually put into the products we use.

>

>Since the big scare from one very small study done in the UK on how parabens can act like estrogens and increase cancer risk, a number of studies have been initiated. A review of recent data stated the following,

>

>"it is biologically implausible that parabens could increase the risk of any estrogen-mediated endpoint, including effects on the male reproductive tract or breast cancer" and that "worst-case daily exposure to parabens would present substantially less risk relative to exposure to naturally occurring endocrine active chemicals (EACs) in the diet such as the phytoestrogen daidzein. In addition, the American Cancer Society has concluded that there is no good scientific evidence to support a claim that use of cosmetics such as antiperspirants increase an individual's risk of developing breast cancer."

>

>Basically, this boils down to this: that any estrogenic effect caused by the doses of parabens received from consumer products are insignificant compared to natural estrogens in the body.

>

>The last piece I'll touch on are the differences between the various parabens. The different names refer to the length of the carbon chain on the paraben molecule. For example, methylparaben has one carbon, ethylparaben has 2 carbons... so on and so forth. The longer the chain, the more estrogenic activity increases. Since it was concluded during in vivo studies (which are accepted as being more relevant than in vitro studies) done with butylparaben (4 carbons long) that estrogenic activity was negligible, it can be concluded that the shorter chained parabens (methyl, ethyl and propyl parabens) have even LESS estrogen-acting properties. These shorter-chained parabens are the types used in Mary Kay products more often. Butylparaben is only used in a small number of MK products and most have been discontinued.