



Behind the label:

Beauty, not just skin deep

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GREEN TIP: Empty your bathroom cabinets and take a look at the labels on your personal care products. Are you are using the safest ingredients for you and your family?

As I was cleaning the bathroom the other day using my favorite half a lemon filled with baking soda on the bathtub, I casually glanced at the ingredients in my favorite shampoo/body wash combo. Well, maybe I wasn't very casual about it. I've been putting it off for years. I love my Philosophy Amazing Grace shampoo/body wash. It smells so amazing, just like the name promises. And other people tell me I smell amazing when I use it. That's a nice plus. But I had a sneaking suspicion all that amazing wasn't too great for me.

When my first daughter was very little, I started to see a lot of news about parabens and their link to breast cancer. An article that really caught my attention was *Cosmetics, Parabens, and Breast Cancer* by Rita Arditti. The article explained that "English researchers had identified parabens in samples of breast tumors. Parabens (alkyl esters of p-hydroxybenzoic acid) are widely used as antimicrobial preservatives in thousands of cosmetics, personal care products, pharmaceutical products and food. There are six commonly used forms (Methylparaben, Ethylparaben, p-Propylparaben, Isobutylparaben, n-Butylparaben and Benzylparaben) and it is estimated that they are used in at least 13,200 cosmetics products."

According to the lead researcher of the study, Philippa Darbre, an oncology expert at the University of Reading (Scotland), "the chemical form of the parabens found in 18 of the 20 tumors tested indicated that they originated from something applied to the skin, the most likely candidates being deodorants, antiperspirants, creams or body sprays."

I also looked at my husband's array of personal products and devised a six-phased plan in an attempt to rid him of unhealthy ones. I am now in phase five. He is stubbornly hanging on to his aluminum-laden antiperspirant... as if I have a right to point fingers.

Back to my Amazing Grace shampoo/body wash.

I slowly went through the list of unpronounceable ingredients - no parabens! But it does contain sodium laureth sulfate and the ubiquitous "fragrance." I know that's not good.

Finally, the ultimate in reliable research: The Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep Cosmetic Safety Database. It scores a 5 which means it's moderately hazardous on a scale of 0 to 10. But it also has an 86% data gap. Which means that 86% of the ingredients in my beloved Amazing Grace have unknown safety data. Bottom line, it's probably not too good for me.

Would I let my two little girls use it? Absolutely not!

And would I let my husband use it? No, but he doesn't use anything that's pink or has the word "grace" in it.