



## Teflon — the stuff in your nonstick pan — was found in 66 of your favorite beauty products

Korin Miller

YAHOO!  
LIFESTYLE

Writer

March 14, 2018

You've probably heard of Teflon before — the chemical is used in nonstick pans and is very popular. Although you expect that it will surface in your cookware, you probably don't anticipate that it will show up in your beauty products. Unfortunately, a new report from the Environmental Working Group found that was the case, and such use is more widespread than you would think.

Environmental Working Group researchers scoured the organization's Skin Deep database and found that Teflon showed up in 66 different products from 15 brands, including a number of household names. Teflon is in a class of fluorinated chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs), which have been linked to cancer, thyroid disease, and reduced effectiveness of childhood vaccines. Teflon was the most commonly found ingredient for this class of chemicals, but researchers found 13 different PFAS chemicals in nearly 200 products from 28 brands.

Teflon and PFASs were found in anti-aging products, waterproof products such as eyeliner and mascara, and detanglers. They also showed up in sunscreen, shampoo, and shaving cream.

PFASs are used in anti-aging products and cosmetics because they provide a smooth, sleek finish, David Andrews, a senior scientist at the Environmental Working Group, tells Yahoo Lifestyle. They are also used as skin-

conditioning agents and can reduce hair frizz, he says. PFASs can also provide oil and water repellence in waterproofing makeup.

News of Teflon in cosmetics isn't new — a 2015 report from the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics and Breast Cancer Fund found that Teflon was used in some anti-aging products. But it is definitely a matter of concern that the chemicals seem to be so widespread in cosmetics.

PFASs are widely used in consumer products. They also appear in stain-resistant carpeting, waterproof clothing, nonstick pots and pans, and grease-resistant food packaging, Andrews says. Unfortunately, they have the potential to build up in your body and have been linked to cancer, hormone disruption, immune system issues, reproductive problems, and liver damage.

Andrews says that the Environmental Working Group is “very concerned” that the chemicals used to make Teflon and other PFAS chemicals are in beauty products. Dupont and 3M, which make the chemicals, have phased out some of the most hazardous members of this class of chemicals, he says, but “there is no evidence the alternative chemicals are any safer.”

“DuPont (now Chemours) switched from using PFOA [perfluorooctanoic acid] to make Teflon to a new chemical called GenX, which has been shown in animal studies to cause many of the same health impacts,” Andrews says. “Very few studies have been done on other alternatives, but their chemical structure is very close to the banned chemicals, so there is good cause for concern.”

Although it is unfortunate that Teflon is in some beauty products, James G. Wagner, an associate professor of pathobiology and diagnostic investigation at Michigan State University, tells Yahoo Lifestyle that this chemical is likely to be a “low concern for health risks.”

“Teflon likely won't be absorbed through the skin to a significant degree and even if it is, it will be at extremely low levels,” he says. “It is a very inert chemical with low reactivity to any human tissues.” Overheating Teflon-coated pans and inhaling the fumes “absolutely a health concern,” Wagner says, but that's different from putting it on your skin.

However, many toxicologists and governmental health agencies are focusing their attention on the other per- and polyfluoroalkyl compounds, he says. But how concerned people should be about them is a big question. “We just don't know the complete picture yet,” Wagner says. “But this issue absolutely has the attention of our nation's toxicologists and we should have some good answers in the next six to eight months, and an even clearer picture in the next two years.”

The National Toxicology Program will be publishing results of a two-year-long study later this year on perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), the now-discontinued Teflon-related chemical that is still found in drinking water, food, and the blood of 90 percent of the U.S. population, he says. (PFOS is not in cosmetics, but has a structure similar to that of chemicals found in cosmetics, he says.)