

PRESS RELEASE

REPORT BY HONG KONG CONSUMER COUNCIL ON TOXIC CHEMICALS FOUND IN NAIL POLISHES

Hong Kong Consumer Council reported on 16 August 2010 through their official website regarding a nail polish test conducted by them involving 42 models. All tested models had heavy metal (lead, mercury and arsenic) contents which were in compliance with the limits specified in the Mainland's Hygienic Standard for Cosmetics. However, prohibited substances in cosmetic use such as benzene was detected in 4 models with concentration ranging from 9.7ppm to 260ppm while DEPH (Diethylhexyl Phthalate) was found in one model at a concentration level of 10ppm. Methanol, toluene and methyl methacrylate on the other hand are restricted substances with certain allowable limits for cosmetic use but was found to be in excess in certain models. One of the 4 models contained methanol nearly 20 times higher than the limit specified and toluene concentration of 27% which exceeded the 25% allowable limit. However, no further information was provided as to the product involved or the company responsible for placing the products in the market.

Benzene is a cancer-causing substance while for phthalates, some animal studies have shown that certain phthalates at high levels can cause birth defects and on long-term exposure in pregnant women, it may cause adverse effects on male genital development in newborns. Toluene may affect the central nervous system and cause irritation of the respiratory tract and methyl methacrylate may cause skin allergic reactions due to its moderate sensitising potential.

Benzene and DEPH are prohibited substances in cosmetic product formulation in Malaysia as well as EU countries. A check on the Cosmetic Product Database of the National Pharmaceutical Control Bureau (NPCB), Ministry of Health of Malaysia confirmed that all cosmetic products notified in Malaysia do not contain these substances in their formulation.

Methanol, toluene and methyl methacrylate are commonly used in nail polish products and are allowed to be part of cosmetics formulation both in Malaysia and EU Countries. Methanol dan toluene are used as solvent in nail products at concentrations within the allowable limit and conditions of use. Methyl methacrylate is used as an artificial nail builder in nail polishes for nail enhancement and extension of the nail.

Consumers are advised to read cosmetic product label thoroughly before using them and to report to the NPCB if they experience any allergic reactions or adverse events from use of these products. Information on product name, description of the side effects and product samples should be provided for further investigation.

Continuous post marketing surveillance programme is an on-going effort of the Ministry of Health to assess the safety, quality and claimed benefits of cosmetic products in Malaysia. Any new information relating to safety concerns of products under its purview will be evaluated and the appropriate regulatory action taken when necessary. Consumers can lodge complaints on cosmetic products to NPCB at 03-78835532/5534 or e-mail to potm@bpfk.gov.my.

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