

Lovely Label, Crude Contents



A survey by the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) shows that "allergy-tested" and "dermatologist-tested" claims are commonly used to sell cosmetic products.

"Allergy-tested" claims for example can be found on the labels of *Pond's Cold Cream Deep Cleanser* and *Oil of Ulan (Sensitive Skin) Active Hydrating Lotion* while "dermatologist-tested" (or dermatologically-tested) claims adorn numerous products, from makeup and skincare products to liquid soap and lipsalve.

In a single check, we found no fewer than 18 cosmetic items with the above claims sold off the shelf and through selling.

Most people rely more on advertising information like the above than on chemical names when buying a product or assessing its allergy potential.

But as such claims are not a safety stamp, we decided to find out if there's a cutting edge to such products. For this, we did a label study of their ingredients—and uncovered a plethora of potential irritants and/or allergens!

Yet symptoms of possible problems were not listed on bottles or packaging; neither were there any warnings such as "discontinue use if irritation develops!"

We analyzed 15 samples which claimed to be allergy-tested and/or dermatologically-tested (or approved).

Of the 14, four (*Boots UV Lipsalve*, *Rexona Dry Talcum Antiperspirant*, *Nivea Moisturising Sun Lotion* and *Sanex Dermaprotector Shower Liquid Soap*) had no list of ingredients, so we couldn't check their contents.

The remaining 10 all had problematic ingredients, which can or may cause sensitivity reactions and/or skin irritation.

Fragrance is a common cause of allergies in nine samples. They are:

- ◆ *Aarid Extra Dry Antiperspirant Deodorant (For Men)*
- ◆ *Pond's Cold Cream Deep Cleanser*
- ◆ *L'Oreal Plenitude Excell-A3 Skin Revealing Cream*
- ◆ *Freeman Avocado and Oatmeal Facial Masque*
- ◆ *Freeman Apricot & Sea Kelp Facial Scrub*
- ◆ *Freeman Dewberry and Peppermint Hydrating Toner*
- ◆ *L'Oreal Facial Firming Serum With Liposomes*
- ◆ *Avon Skin Polisher With Walnut*
- ◆ *Avon Moisture Therapy Skin Lotion*

Methylparaben was present in nine samples and

propylparaben in seven. The parabens or hydrobenzoates are synthetic preservatives derived from a petroleum base. They are notorious for causing allergic reactions.

Except for *Aarid* antiperspirant deodorant and *Pond's Cold Cream Deep Cleanser*, all of the above products and *Oil of Ulan Active Hydrating Lotion (For Sensitive Skin)* contain either methylparaben or propylparaben, or both. Considering all the evidence unearthed so far in the marketing of "special care" cosmetics, it is obvious that manufacturers should give consumers clearer information about the allergy potential of cosmetics.

CAP suggests the following:

- ◆ Product labeling and information should include explanations of terms like "allergy-tested," "dermatologist-tested," "hypoallergenic," etc.
- ◆ Cosmetics bearing "allergy-tested" or other similar claims should be required to undergo an internationally approved method of testing.
- ◆ Warning statements like "discontinue use if irritation develops" should also appear on the product label.

Source: *Utusan-Konsumer* Mid-June 1997

