

Food and Drug Administration Posts Information about PFAS in Cosmetics for the First Time

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PFAS Found in Personal Care Products

Last week, the FDA posted information about per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, commonly known as PFAS, found in personal care products such as lotions, nail polish, shaving cream, foundation and mascara. PFAS chemicals are often added as ingredients in cosmetics to condition and smooth skin or to impact product consistency and texture. Some PFAS are also present in cosmetics and personal care products unintentionally due to impurities or the breakdown of PFAS ingredients that form other PFAS.

Personal care and cosmetics labels list the ingredients of the product in descending order of predominance and often include PFAS chemicals such as PTFE (polytetrafluoroethylene), perfluorooctyl triethoxysilane, perfluorononyl dimethicone, perfluorodecalin and perfluorohexane.

PFAS are a diverse group of human-made chemicals that are estimated to include over 5,000 different types. They are resistant to heat, oil, grease and water, which make them long lasting in the environment. PFAS are often called "forever chemicals" because of their ability to persist in the environment. Because of their resistant properties, PFAS have been used in a wide range of products including stain-resistant fabrics, carpeting, cleaning products, paints and fire-fighting foams. They are also authorized for use by FDA in some cookware, food packaging and food processing equipment.

Research on PFAS in Cosmetics and Health Impacts

There have been few studies on PFAS concentrations in cosmetics. In the studies that have been published, scientists found the concentrations of PFAS in cosmetics ranged from parts per billion to 100s of parts per million. Some types of PFAS found in cosmetics cannot be easily measured because the specific "fingerprint" of the chemical compound may not be available. This makes the chemical difficult to detect and quantify in studies.

Research on absorption of PFAS through the skin from cosmetics is also limited. The only risk assessment study about PFAS in cosmetics was done in 2018 by Denmark's Environmental Protection Agency. The study focused on five different types of PFAS found in a large number of different cosmetics products in



relatively high concentrations. The results showed that the levels of PFAS present in the products tested are unlikely to pose health risks to consumers. However, FDA believes that more research is needed to determine toxicological profiles for PFAS in cosmetics, the extent to which various PFAS in cosmetics can be absorbed through the skin, and the potential for human health risks from this type of exposure. FDA will continue to monitor PFAS research as it develops.

FDA's Voluntary Cosmetic Registration Program (VCRP) and PFAS Use

The FDA has a voluntary cosmetic registration program that is a reporting system used by manufacturers, packers and distributors of cosmetic products that are in commercial distribution in the United States. Data in the VCRP show that over a nine-month period between 2019 and 2020, there were approximately 21 types of PFAS used as ingredients in cosmetics. During that same time period, 15 of the types decreased in use from the first report in 2019 to the second report in 2020 and the number of formulas containing at least one of the 21 types decreased from 506 to 235. FDA cautions that because the registration program is voluntary, the data can't be used to draw overall conclusions about the types and amounts of PFAS present in cosmetics.

Lawmakers Plan to Introduce Legislation Strengthening FDA's Authority over PFAS

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics is lobbying Representative Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-N.J.), Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), and Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) who plan to introduce legislation strengthening the FDA's authority over cosmetics and banning some PFAS from being used in cosmetics.

The 1938 law that gives the FDA authority over cosmetics says that cosmetics must be safe but FDA does not review them ahead of time. The Cosmetic Ingredient Review, an industry-funded panel, examines ingredient safety while FDA participates but does not vote on the panel's conclusions.

The Campaign wants lawmakers to include two California laws from 2020 in the legislation. One of the laws banned 24 ingredients in cosmetics, 13 of which were PFAS. The other California law requires manufacturers to disclose flavor and fragrance ingredients used in cosmetics by 2022.

At the same time, the Personal Care Products Council, which represents around 600 ingredient and product manufacturers and companies, says that the beauty industry is confident in the safety of the ingredients included in its cosmetic products. The Council also supports the FDA's effort to educate consumers about product ingredients and track the progress in PFAS research as well as encourages its members to participate in the FDA's Voluntary Cosmetic Registration Program.

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