



# THE MAKERS OF NATURAL BEAUTY

## ECOSTYLE

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**I**NCREASING health threats to those with weak immune systems is obvious throughout the world. That is precisely why the potential for the organic cosmetic industry is vast.

Natural cosmetic manufacturers help expand public consciousness over what is seeping through our skin and water supplies. Although a tricky task, education is accomplished through advertising and public relations. The challenge is to inform the public in a simple manner about complex chemistry. Competition actually strengthens this market while expertise and honesty are essential to sell it.

First of all, people need to understand that whatever is applied to the human body seeps through skin pores and into the bloodstream. According to Aubrey Hampton, founder of Aubrey Organics and author of *The Take-Charge Beauty Book*, people absorb 60 percent of whatever formulations they put on their skin. Think about typical hygiene. From toothpaste to a woman's makeup, about 100 chemicals are absorbed into one body upon rising each day. Common personal hygiene is literally toxic to those without a strong immune system.

As for legalities, there are a few substances clearly prohibited by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Yet in general, cosmetics and personal care products are not regulated until after they are in the marketplace. Re-

gardless of policy and recent organic labeling standards, people like Peter Dingle of Murdoch University in Perth, Australia claim about 15 percent of the population suffers. Mr. Dingle is a toxicologist whose research reports adverse cosmetic reactions ranging from asthma to chronic fatigue syndrome, to low sperm counts and allergies. Today his North American colleagues concur with his published findings.

Suzanne Hall of Living Nature in New Zealand responds to the most argued issue of parabens as preservatives in naturally claimed cosmetics. See News & Talk on <http://livingnature.com>, where an independent government laboratory at Hort Research reveals their results from a series of paraben tests carried out by Dr. Iona Weir. I call it the good, bad and invisible.

Why the focus on parabens? Because you can hardly find a cream, lotion or potion without some form of paraben. Common examples in conventional cosmetics are: butylparaben, ethylparaben, isobutylparaben, isopropylparaben, methylparaben, and propylparaben. Natural and organic suppliers traditionally volunteer ingredient listings, but often with defensive statements over their use of parabens.

While parabens don't irritate the skin or create a visible toxic effect, they can cause unsuspected long-term damage.

Parabens could be produced naturally, which sounds good, but at a high cost from plants with gum benzoin. Unfortunately gum benzoin plants have the same negative effects on human cells as petroleum based parabens. Thus, it is true that some natural extracts are not beneficial for the skin – which is bad for simplistic marketing. The natural cosmetic industry requires strategy to present complex issues over natural versus synthetic.

Thanks to persistent chemists and experts, there are fragrances without phthalates, cosmetics without parabens, toiletries without lathering

agents, colors without synthetics, and animal-based materials acquired without cruelty. I believe natural and organic cosmetic and makeup enterprises can win the synthetic-free battles that face them if they forego mass production. Such businesses especially have a bright future in the green market because competition is so slim.

Could the first business that decides to date their merchandise (as food suppliers do) going to start a favorable trend? Will consumers purchase face cream from a refrigerated shelf as yogurt? Will eye liner pencils have an expiration date? Where do you fit a date on an eye liner pencil? Is it a sticky label you can post on your calendar?

Rhonda Karayan, cofounder of NaturElle in Denver, reported total North and South America makeup revenues were \$7.68 billion in 2001. SPINS, a market research company in San Francisco affirmed revenues for natural makeup in the U.S. alone hit \$6.7 million that same year. Sales growth seems to average the same as groceries, about 3 percent annually. Just a little slice of this pie can nurture a small business.

You can regard this cosmetic revolution as the consumer-driven course of the 21st century. Notice organic merchandising steadily expanding in large discount stores where they don't even have the expertise to assist consumers. Those with immune disorders are educating themselves while natural skin care manufacturers are struggling with politics. Clearly, this is a great time to educate and catch the organic cosmetic wave through advertising, public relations and most essentially, – a knowledgeable sales staff who can simplify complex research. □

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