

# COSMETICS FACTS

From the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

## Hair Dyes and Relaxers



*The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reminds you to get the facts before using hair dyes and hair relaxers.*

**Hair dye** is used to color your hair. **Hair relaxers** are used to straighten your hair. Both hair dye and hair relaxers can hurt your skin, hair, and eyes, especially if you are not careful.

When hair dyes and relaxers are used properly and according to package directions, some of these problems can be prevented. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reminds you to get the facts *before* using hair dyes and hair relaxers.

### Tips to Keep You Safe

Careful and proper use of hair products can help avoid problems and keep you safe from having a reaction. Use the following guidelines when using hair dyes and hair relaxers:

#### For Both Hair Dyes and Relaxers:

- **Follow all directions** on the label and in the package.
- Keep hair dyes and relaxers **away from your eyes**, and do not dye your eyebrows or eyelashes. This can hurt your eyes and may even cause blindness.
- **Wear gloves** when applying hair dye or relaxers.
- Do not leave the product on longer than the directions say you should. **Keep track of time** using a clock or a timer.
- **Rinse well with water** after using hair dye or relaxers.
- Keep hair dyes and relaxers **out of the reach of children**.
- **Do not scratch or brush** your scalp for three days before using hair dyes or relaxers.
- Do not dye or relax your hair if your scalp is **irritated, sunburned, or damaged**.
- **Wait at least 14 days** after bleaching, relaxing, or perming your hair before using dye.

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## For Hair Dyes Only:

- **Do a patch test** on your skin *every time* before dyeing your hair. Put a small amount of dye on a quarter-sized area of skin in the bend of your elbow. Leave it there for 48 hours. **If you get a rash, do not use the dye.**
- P-phenylene diamine (PPD) is a common hair dye ingredient that some people become allergic to. If you want to avoid PPD, **check the ingredient list** on the hair dye label. In addition, if you are avoiding PPD, don't get "black henna" tattoos, which are also likely to contain that ingredient.

## For Relaxers Only:

- Avoid applying the relaxer to your **scalp and other skin areas**. This can irritate or burn your skin.

## Report Problems to FDA

The law does *not* require hair dyes or hair relaxers to be approved by FDA before they are sold in stores. However, FDA *does* monitor consumer reports of adverse events with these products.

**Please notify FDA** if you experience itchy or raw skin, scabs, hair loss, or another unexpected reaction after using a hair dye or hair relaxer.

### Follow these steps:

1. Stop using the product.
2. Call your healthcare provider to find out how to take care of the problem.
3. Report problems to FDA in either of these ways:
  - Contact **MedWatch**, FDA's Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting Program:
    1. By Phone: **1-800-FDA-1088**
    2. Online: File a voluntary report at <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/medwatch/index.cfm?action=reporting.home>
  - Contact the **Consumer Complaint Coordinator** in your area. Locate one here: <http://www.fda.gov/Safety/ReportaProblem/ConsumerComplaintCoordinators>

➔ To learn more about using hair products safely, visit <http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/Products/Ingredients/Products/ucm127988.htm>



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For more information, contact the U.S. Food and Drug Administration Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition Food and Cosmetic Information Center at **1-888-SAFEFOOD** (toll free), Monday through Friday 10 AM to 4 PM ET (except Thursdays from 12 PM to 1 PM ET and Federal Holidays). Or, visit the FDA website at [www.fda.gov/educationresourcelibrary](http://www.fda.gov/educationresourcelibrary)