

CHEMICALS: EFA members best practices on "suitable for" labels

Cosmetics, hygiene and household cleaning products are an essential part of our day-to-day life. However, by using these products, we are constantly exposed to chemicals they contain. Most of them do not harm the majority of the population, but they might provoke severe reactions in vulnerable people, such as those with allergy, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Exposure to chemicals through skin or by breathing the air polluted by chemicals (respiratory sensitisers) may worsen the symptoms and/or lead to disease development.



The most common ingredients in cosmetics that cause allergic reactions are fragrances and preservatives. There is also an increasing concern on our aggregated exposure to chemicals, known as the "cocktail effect". The cocktail effect is a combination of several chemicals having effects that cannot be predicted altogether from their behaviour on their own. In addition, evidence shows that chemicals toxicity needs to be studied over the long-term.

Despite a variety of products described as "hypoallergenic" or "natural", these labels may not be necessarily trusted, as these can also contain a great number of common allergens. Thus, often an exhaustive check of the chemical compound list remains the only option to stay safe for people with allergy, sensitivities, intolerances and respiratory diseases.

To provide a support to allergic consumers, some of EFA members developed labels and recommendations for certain cosmetics and household products that are suitable for vulnerable populations and are unlikely to cause a reaction or exacerbate the disease.



DENMARK

Danish Asthma and Allergy Association grant a "Blue Label" to products where allergenic substances are generally not allowed and the use of products that can cause an irritation is limited. These substances include perfume (both natural and synthetic), added formaldehyde or formaldehyde donors, kathon, MI and MCI, rosin. Dyes are not allowed to be in contact with the skin. Certain extracts, such as Aloe Vera, are required to be purified from allergenic substances. They check how the product will be used and all its ingredients, including concentrations.



Astma-Allergi Danmark

The "Blue Label" page is available here: www.thebluelabel.eu.



FINLAND

The Finnish Allergy and Asthma Federation, in cooperation with doctors, check that sun lotions, hair and skin care, and cosmetic products respect specified criteria before granting the “Finnish Allergy Label”. In particular, these products shall not contain perfumes (like perfume, aroma, fragrance or individual perfume chemicals), generally irritating or sensitising ingredients, such as Phenylenediamines, foam formers, metal impurities, formaldehyde and its liberators, preservatives, essential oils, etc. The products cannot contain composites plant ingredients. Products ingredients need always to be clean and high-quality, certificates or test documents (example: cleanliness) might be asked. All products need to be send to the expert accompanied with the complete chemical compound list, including chemical name, INCI name, CAS number, as well as concentrations. They also have maximum levels set for some ingredient: for instance, the preservative phenoxyethanol needs to be maximum 0.70% (while in cosmetics, this criterion is 1.0%), and two samples are needed.



The “Finnish Allergy Label” page is available here: www.allergiatunnus.fi.



FRANCE

The French Allergy Prevention Association (AFPRAL) is increasingly concerned about the provision of accurate and trustworthy information to allergic consumers, regarding cosmetics and cleaning products. To contribute to better risk management among allergic consumers, AFPRAL recommends certain products. A list of these products can be found here: <http://allergies.afpral.fr/2015-04-02-12-08-19/2015-04-02-12-08-06/produits-agrees>.



LATVIA

The Latvian Allergy and Asthma Association provides consumers with advice on allergy and asthma friendly cosmetics, chemicals and other household products.

The recommended products can be found here: http://www.astmaalergija.lv/?id_p=&id=24.





European Federation of
Allergy and Airways Diseases
Patients Associations



NORWAY

Over the years, the Norwegian Asthma and Allergy Association has assessed a wide variety of goods, from skin-care products, via paint to foodstuffs. They have then issued recommendations for certain products which are found to provide minimal risks of health related problems. The focus is on clean and pure contents.



**ASTMA- OG
ALLERGIFORBUNDET**
- gjør Norge friskere

More information can be found here: <http://www.naaf.no/no/english/Product-recommendations/>.



SWEDEN

Scenting of products and environments is increasing, as well as the number of scent-sensitive people contacting Swedish Asthma and Allergy Association. Perfume fragrances become an accessibility barriers for people with fragrance sensitivity. Therefore, the association run a consumer campaign aimed at the general public to drive attention to the problem of odours in the community.



Swedish Asthma and Allergy Association also guides the consumers that are in search of products that are hypoallergenic. The recommended products are labelled with the Association's name. The products are free from allergens, perfumes and irritating substances in such quantities that there is no known, medically reported cases. More information can be found here: <http://astmaoallergiforbundet.se/svalanmarkt/>.



UNITED KINGDOM

Allergy UK grants the "Seal of Approval" to reassure consumers that the product has been scientifically tested, and found to be efficient at reducing/removing allergens from the environment or that it has been shown to have significantly reduced allergen/chemical content. The testing is carried out by an independent laboratory in line with protocols which have been created by allergy specialists for the "Seal of Approval", specifically to benefit those with allergy, asthma, sensitivity and intolerance.



The list of products that currently hold the "Seal of Approval" award can be found here: <https://www.allergyuk.org/products-and-services/listing>.