

# The Skincare Ingredient 'Red' List

Avoid these for healthier, happier skin.



**Unlock** the hidden truths behind your skincare products with our **Red List** guide – the essential roadmap to spotting harmful ingredients that could be quietly sabotaging your skin and health.

Quick, clear, and visual, this guide reveals the top problem-makers in cosmetics, why they matter, and how to swap them for safer, smarter alternatives – empowering you to make confident, healthy choices every time you shop.



SKIN  
Nurtured by Nature



## FORMALDEHYDE & Donors (Risk: HIGH)

**Used as:** Preservative

**Found in:** Nail/hair products, some creams

**Aliases:** DMDM Hydantoin, Quaternium-15, Imidazolidinyl Urea

**Why Avoid:** Carcinogen, strong allergen, respiratory risk

**Swap for:** Sodium benzoate, potassium sorbate



## Methylisothiazolinone (MI/MCI) (Risk: HIGH)

**Used as:** Preservative

**Found in:** Wipes, cleansers, makeup removers

**Aliases:** MI, Kathon, Methylchlorisothiazolinon

**Why avoid:** Potent allergen, severe dermatitis

**Swap for:** Ethylhexylglycerin, potassium sorbate



**! PARABENS**  
**(Risk: MEDIUM)**

**Used as:** Preservative  
**Found in:** Creams, makeup, shampoos  
**Aliases:** Methyl-, propyl-, butyl-, ethyl-paraben  
**Why Avoid:** Endocrine disruption potential; irritant  
**Swap for:** Sodium benzoate, organic acids



**X OXYBENZONE (BP-3)**  
**(Risk: HIGH)**

**Used as:** Chemical UV filter  
**Found in:** Chemical Sunscreens, SPF creams  
**Aliases:** Oxybenzone, Benzophenone-3  
**Why avoid:** Endocrine disruption, environmental coral toxin - Avoid in Pregnancy, all especially children  
**Swap for:** Zinc oxide, Titanium dioxide



**! PHTHALATES**  
**(Risk: HIGH)**

**Used as:** Plasticizers & fragrance stabilizers  
**Found in:** Perfumes, nail polish, hair sprays  
**Aliases:** Diethyl Phthalate (DEP), "Fragrance", DBP, DMP  
**Why Avoid:** Endocrine disruptors, reproductive toxicity  
**Swap for:** Phthalate-free, glycerin, essential oil scents

SKIN  
Nurtured by Nature



**X TRICLOSAN**  
**(Risk: MEDIUM)**

**Used as:** Antibacterial agent  
**Found in:** Soaps, toothpaste, acne treatments  
**Aliases:** Triclosan, 5-chloro-2-(2,4-dichlorophenoxy) phenol  
**Why avoid:** Endocrine disruption, antibacterial resistance, irritation (now banned in many countries)  
**Swap for:** Benzalkonium-free, plant-based cleansers



**! BHA/BHT**  
**(Risk: HIGH)**

**Used as:** Preservative  
**Found in:** Lipstick, creams, SPF  
**Aliases:** BHA, BHT  
**Why Avoid:** Possible carcinogen, hormone disruptor  
**Swap for:** Tocopherol, Rosemary extract



**✗ Sodium Lauryl/Laureth Sulfate**  
**(Risk: MEDIUM)**

**Used as:** Surfactant  
**Found in:** Cleansers, shampoos, foaming agents  
**Aliases:** SLS, SLES  
**Why avoid:** Harsh surfactant, strips skin's natural oils  
**Swap for:** Decyl glucoside, coco-betaine



**! HYDROQUINONE**  
**(Risk: HIGH)**

**Used as:** Skin lightening agent  
**Found in:** Spot correctors, brightening creams  
**Aliases:** HQ, p-di-hydroxybenzene, benzene-1,4-diol  
**Why Avoid:** Carcinogen risk, ochronosis (blue-black skin), irritation  
**Swap for:** Azelaic acid, kojic acid, vitamin C



**✗ Cocamide DEA**  
**(Risk: MEDIUM)**

**Used as:** Cleansers & Surfactant  
**Found in:** Shampoo, body wash, soaps  
**Aliases:** Cocamide DEA  
**Why avoid:** Suspected carcinogen (less common now), irritant  
**Swap for:** Cocamidopropyl betaine, natural surfactants

## How to Protect Your Skin:

- Always read ingredient labels
- Patch test new products
- Avoid “red list” on sensitive, eczema, or pregnancy
- Swap for safer, eco-friendly alternatives

This **Red List** helps you dodge the worst offenders. But are *there more*, what about the *good guys*, safer *alternatives to opt for*, the *marketing tricks*, and how to tell if a product is even worth your money?

*Stay ahead of the skincare game—don't let hidden toxins undermine your glow.*

*For a deeper dive into the science behind your beauty products, plus expert tips, personalized routines, and exclusive ingredient cheat sheets, grab our full Ebook.*

*Empower yourself to decode every label, shop smarter, and nurture your skin with confidence. Your healthiest skin journey starts here!*

Learn to **decode skincare labels like a pro** with our full guide –  
‘What’s really in your skincare.’

**Thank you!**