# Experts warn of harmful chemicals in cosmetics linked to reproductive health issues



Concerns regarding the presence of harmful chemicals in everyday cosmetics have been raised by leading experts, who warn that these substances may be linked to an increasing incidence of debilitating gynaecological disorders. These endocrine disruptors, found in products such as lipsticks, face creams, and sunscreens, are also present in various everyday items like plastic bottles, clothing, and even household furniture.

Dr Kevin Osteen, Professor of Gynaecology and Obstetrics at Vanderbilt University, has highlighted the widespread nature of these chemicals, stating, “These are chemicals that we’re exposed to every day, used in products that are ubiquitous in our daily routines.” He emphasised that comprehensive studies have shown these substances interfere with hormonal systems, which are vital for metabolic processes, mood, and reproductive health. Dr Osteen cautioned that ignoring these findings may lead to a surge in health issues, warning, “If we don’t do anything, we’re going to see a tsunami of problems.”

Recent years have seen a disturbing rise in cases of conditions such as endometriosis—a condition where endometrial tissue grows outside the womb, causing severe pain and infertility—and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), which can lead to irregular periods and weight gain. Endometriosis cases worldwide have escalated from approximately 3.4 million in 1990 to an estimated 190 million today. In the UK, the occurrence of PCOS has doubled over the past two decades.

While some medical professionals attribute the increase to heightened awareness and better diagnosis, they also acknowledge that environmental factors, including pollutants and dietary contaminants, likely contribute significantly to this trend. Dr Giada Frontino from the Phoenix Hospital Group in London noted that, alongside improved public understanding of reproductive health, new insights into how pollution impacts health cannot be overlooked.

Professor Adam Balen, a leading PCOS specialist at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, affirmed that his patient caseload has surged, with waiting times for appointments expanding from three months to a year. Notably, he pointed out that environmental toxins—including those used in cosmetics—can significantly influence the development of these conditions.

Three categories of chemicals have emerged as particularly concerning. Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are synthetic compounds commonly found in cosmetics. They are often listed on product labels under terms like PTFE. Although the European Commission has taken steps to regulate bisphenols, such as the notorious bisphenol A (BPA)—banned in food contact materials since December 2022—these chemicals remain used in cosmetic packaging. Phthalates, another class of concern, are associated with increased breast cancer risk and developmental disorders in children exposed in utero. These chemicals frequently appear in cosmetics and personal care products.

Research conducted by Professor Katie Burns at the University of Cincinnati has revealed connections between these chemicals and reproductive health issues. She stated, “What we’re seeing is that certain chemicals in the environment are making women who are not genetically susceptible develop [endometriosis],” indicating a link to hormone disruption caused by substances like bisphenols and phthalates.

Moreover, a study published in The BMJ anticipated a significant increase in Parkinson’s disease cases, projected to double by 2050 due to an ageing population and improved diagnostic capabilities. Neurologists have suggested that the older population's growth, particularly for a disease primarily affecting late life, will lead to increased numbers. Caregivers will face escalating demands as the disease progresses, as noted by experts such as Dr Daniel Truong from MemorialCare Orange Coast Medical Center.

While exact causes for Parkinson’s remain elusive, risk factors include age, familial history, and repeated exposure to certain environmental toxins. Steps to support brain health and potentially reduce risk include maintaining a healthy diet, regular exercise, and avoiding environmental toxins, as advised by neurologists.

These emerging insights and rising concerns surrounding both reproductive health and neurodegenerative diseases highlight the pressing need for continued research and understanding of the impacts of ubiquitous chemicals in modern life.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://chemtrust.org/cosmetics/> - Corroborates concerns about endocrine disruptors in cosmetics, such as parabens and PFAS, and their potential impact on reproductive health. It highlights the widespread presence of these chemicals in everyday products like cosmetics and personal care items.
* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9743013/> - Provides evidence on the effects of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) like phthalates and bisphenols on reproductive disorders, supporting the link between these chemicals and conditions such as PCOS and endometriosis.
* <https://www.ifm.org/articles/endocrine-disruptors-and-womens-health> - Details the impact of endocrine-disrupting chemicals, specifically bisphenols and parabens, on women's reproductive health, including conditions like PCOS and early menopause. It emphasizes the role of exposure pathways such as personal care products.
* <https://echemportal.inchem.org/inchem-home.html> - While this link alone is not specific, the eChemPortal is a database where information on chemicals like PFAS, phthalates, and bisphenols can be found, supporting the discussion on these substances.
* <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/endocrine-disruptors> - Discusses the general impact of endocrine-disrupting chemicals, which aligns with concerns raised about their effects on reproductive health and neurodegenerative diseases.
* <https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/human/chemicals/endocrine-disrupters> - Provides insights into the regulation and monitoring of endocrine-disrupting chemicals by the European Environment Agency, supporting the mention of regulatory actions like the European Commission's efforts on bisphenols.