

# Lead Prevention and Healthy Housing Newsletter

## Bathroom Drawer Mystique

### Ever Wondered?

According to **myfitnesspal.com**, toothpaste (based on one popular brand), contains **one calorie** per “smear.”



By comparison, Wrigley's reports that there are ten calories in a stick of Freedent winterfresh gum.



The most revealing place in a home may be the bathroom vanity drawers, which generally teem with personal care products. A nosy guest might finally confirm that—yes!—his host does, in fact, cover his grays. There's just something fascinating about all those bottles and potions and tubes. Their contents are colorful and fragrant, and life is good, or so it is assumed until a potential health risk surfaces. At that point, questions abound regarding the safety of a variety of personal care products.

In recent months, talcum powder has reignited the safety buzz, as questions continue to eddy about a potential association with ovarian cancer. The American Cancer Society, on its website, weighs in on the talcum controversy. As a natural substance, talc contains asbestos, which has carcinogenic effects. Since the 1970s, the modified talcum products used for personal care items have been asbestos free. Now under examination (and not for the first) time is the effect of non-asbestos talcum powder when used for feminine hygiene.

From the FDA  
Website:



**“The law doesn’t require cosmetic products or ingredients, other than color additives, to have FDA approval before they go on the market, and it doesn’t require cosmetic firms to share their safety data with the agency. Cosmetics must be properly labeled and safe when used according to their directions or when used in the customary or expected way.”**

\*Information source:  
Environmental Health Policy Institute  
“What’s That Smell? The Not So Sexy Truth about Fragrance”

Three successful 2016 lawsuits, totaling \$197 million, were levied against Johnson’s Baby Powder. Hundreds of additional suits have been filed to date. The American Cancer Society, relying on evidence from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), passes along the following:

*“Based on limited evidence from human studies of a link to ovarian cancer . . . the perineal use of talc-based body powder is ‘**possibly** carcinogenic to humans.’”*

The safety of cosmetics is often scrutinized at times such as these, as well, meaning that questions about lead in lipstick and other forms of makeup surface once again. In December 2016, the Food and Drug Administration issued draft guidance to the cosmetic industry. This guidance “recommends a maximum level of lead in cosmetic products,” of less than 10 parts per million (ppm). This measurement takes into account the reality that lead’s natural profusion within the environment is such that “it can’t be avoided” in the manufacture of cosmetics.

Because lipstick exposure to lead would generally occur through ingestion (a woman licking her lips), the FDA calculated the maximum lead level with the same consideration with which it assesses exposure via food. The risk, they added, of lead exposure from other cosmetics (eye shadow or lotion, for example) is even less than that of lipstick.

A still-emergent concern with fragrance is steadily gaining attention. Many health and beauty aids, cleaning products, and plastics contain the blandly nondescriptive additive known as “fragrance.” In fact, fragrance is not a single ingredient but a number of chemical compounds. Common reactions to fragrance include respiratory and asthmatic symptoms, and, particularly troubling for children, hormonal disruption, which can affect temperament, learning, and reproduction.\*

**Question:** In determining what personal care products are safest, where does one start?



**A Valentine's night video, perhaps? The top ten most romantic movies, according to *Better Homes and Gardens*:**

*When Harry Met Sally*

*Pride and Prejudice*

*Love Story*

*Pretty Woman*

*Breakfast at Tiffany's*

*Sleepless in Seattle*

*An Affair to Remember*

*Crazy, Stupid Love*

*The Notebook*

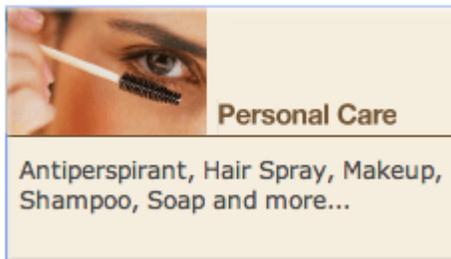
*Love, Actually*

For assistance with lead prevention outreach:  
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**Answer: With the Household Products Database!**

Located online at:

<https://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov> ,



this site, maintained by the National Library of Medicine, features comprehensive information on more than 1,200 products related to the home, lawn, vehicle, and garage. Each product's ingredients are listed, along with instructions for storage, and—most importantly—any potential health risks. Potential health effects are rated on a scale of 0 (minimal) to 4 (severe). In only a few seconds, it is easy to review purchases before ever heading to the store!



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