

Not-so-natural babycare and skincare?

Residues from everything you put onto your skin can be absorbed into your body. The use of hormone patches for menopausal women and nicotine patches are testament to this. During pregnancy, residues may filter through from a woman's blood stream to her growing baby. During breastfeeding they may filter through her milk.

It is important that women carefully consider the products they use on themselves and on newborn during these times.

WHAT ABOUT THE LATEST 'BUZZ' WORDS?

Many manufacturers have begun to use the words *organic* and *natural* on labelling and in advertising, in an effort to give the impression of a 'pure' product. However, it is not always the case.

Melbourne skincare guru Catherine Arfi, founder of Pure Spa and Aromababy, a natural baby products manufacturer, shares her thoughts on the subject.

"Ten years ago aromatherapy and 'natural' ingredients were only just emerging as popular factors in selling retail product.

"Numerous brands were launched using this kind of wording as part of their marketing campaigns. The truth is, many products claiming to be natural still use synthetic fragrance, petro-chemicals, sulphates (which ensure a product highly foams), propylene glycol, parabens and more in an effort to sell more product" Catherine says.

"Several brands currently on retail shelves offer consumers incorrect information on either the ingredients disclosed or the interpretation of the ingredients – giving the impression the products are far more 'natural' and 'organic' than perhaps is really the case."

Catherine continues: "With export, it becomes even more of a problem. Import laws in many countries allow the sale of Aussie-made skincare without complete ingredient listings. On the other hand, some export products are now on local shelves with little or no ingredients listed whatsoever.

"Manufacturers should, by law, be disclosing all ingredients in the correct descending order, which allows consumers to make a decision based on the facts. Unfortunately, the lack of effective regulation of the skincare industry makes it difficult for consumers to really know what they are purchasing."

Certified organic ingredients, if used in effective or 'therapeutic' amounts, generally become the 'active' component of a formulation. Although they are required to be used in only small percentages to be effective, they are often used in fractions of a per cent and offer no therapeutic benefit whatsoever.

According to Catherine, "this is often due to brand owners being unqualified and therefore unable to be intimately involved with formulating, sourcing of organic ingredients, sighting of supporting documentation and overseeing the eventual manufacturing process."

HOW CAN CONSUMERS KNOW A PRODUCT IS PURE?

Organic certification is the best assurance for consumers that a product is all natural. Currently, although organic and natural products exist in essence, there are very few companies that have gone down the certification road. Here is an opportunity for those who comply with the Organic Standard to use

organic certification to their marketing advantage and assure consumers of the integrity of their products.

Gordon Robertson, from The Pharmaceutical Plant Co Pty Ltd, is in the process of obtaining certification with ACO for his range of Wild organic shampoo conditioners and skin care. "We have a licence from the TGA (the Therapeutic Goods Administration) to make herbal medicines and all our hair and skin care products are made following the strict code of GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice)," he said.

"Our Gentle Shampoo is formulated especially for babies and is one of our best sellers," he said. "It makes my blood boil to see how easily some manufacturers can get away with false claims. We are pursuing certification for recognition of our products. Too many companies are making bogus claims

they are natural and organic, or even certified organic! Consumers need to look for a certification logo as their guarantee."



WHAT'S INVOLVED IN CERTIFICATION?

Akiko Nicholls, certification officer of Australian Certified Organic explains: "Understanding the criteria in the Standard is important. People are often unaware that products can be certified organic if they comply with the rule of 95% or more certified organic agricultural

origin ingredients and if additives/aids meet the requirements.

"Water and salt are excluded from the 95% rule, and therefore products such as lavender water can be 100% certified organic – certified organic lavender being the only ingredient other than water."

Where products contain less than 95% agricultural origin ingredients, the product cannot be certified organic, however it may be registered with BFA as an Approved Product if all ingredients are natural and in compliance with the Standard.

Akiko continues: "A cosmetic product, for example, may contain more than 5% non-certified organic agricultural ingredients and therefore cannot be certified organic, however it may be registered with BFA.

"Although BFA-registered products cannot be claimed as organic, in both cases, the Bud logo is displayed on labelling and consumers can be assured that the product is all natural without the use of synthetic or chemical additives or processing aids."

Manufacturers interested in organic certification can visit the Australian Certified Organic website < www.australianorganic.com.au > for more information. The Organic Standard is available for free download or a hardcopy can be bought online. ■