

ASEAN Advisory Statement on Talc

Cosmetic products which are sold or supplied in the ASEAN countries must comply with the applicable prohibitions or restrictions on cosmetic ingredients as well as the product labelling stipulated under the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive (ACD) which has been adopted by all the ASEAN Member States (AMS).

Talc is allowed for use as an ingredient in cosmetic products under the ACD and EU Cosmetic Regulation. It is also allowed as a cosmetic ingredient in many countries. Talc is a naturally occurring mineral, composed mainly of magnesium, silicon and oxygen. It is used as an abrasive, absorbent, anticaking, bulking or opacifying agent in products such as body powder, eye shadow and face powder.

Talc is divided into two grades: Industrial-grade and Pharmaceutical/Food/Cosmetic-grade. Cosmetic-grade talc must not contain contaminants such as asbestos, a prohibited substance under the ACD. Cosmetic grade talc is generally regarded to be a safe ingredient in cosmetic products worldwide.

There have been concerns about a possible link between talcum powder and ovarian cancer. The ASEAN Cosmetic Scientific Body (ACSB) has assessed that the available evidence globally remains inconclusive in establishing such a link to date. In this regard, the ACSB has advised that talc is allowed to be used in cosmetic products with the current requirements on the product labelling.

At present, talcum powders used in children must be labelled with a warning that states “Keep powder away from children’s nose and mouth” to avoid inhalation. This is in line with the product labelling requirements in the European Union (EU) and Canada.

ASEAN countries will continue to monitor closely any new safety data related to the use of talc in cosmetic product and will take appropriate action and inform the public if necessary.

References:

1. Safety Assessment of Talc as Used in Cosmetics, Cosmetic Ingredient Review, Dec 18, 2012
2. Perineal powder use and risk of ovarian cancer, Houghton, S. C. et al. J. Natl Cancer Inst 2014, 106 (9), 1-6
3. Douching, talc use and risk of ovarian cancer, Gonzales, N. L., O'Brien, K. M., D'Aloisio, A.A., Sandler, D. P., Weinberg, C. R., Epidemiology, 2016, 27 (6), 797-802