

ASEAN Cosmetic Committee (ACC) Statement on Parabens

Parabens are widely used as preservatives in cosmetics, food, and pharmaceutical products. Preservatives are added in cosmetics to prevent product deterioration and contamination by bacteria, mould and fungi, thus protecting both the products and consumers. Methylparaben, ethylparaben, butylparaben and propylparaben are the most commonly used parabens in cosmetics.

Cosmetic products marketed in ASEAN Member States must comply with the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive (ACD). The use of methylparaben, ethylparaben and their salts as preservatives added in finished cosmetic products is allowed within the permitted limits and conditions of use as reflected in Annex VI of the ACD. The use of propylparaben, butylparaben and their salts are allowed in cosmetics except for leave-on products designed for application on nappy area of children under 3 years old. Isopropylparaben, isobutylparaben, phenylparaben, benzylparaben and pentylparaben are banned in the ACD and European Cosmetic Regulation.

In general, parabens are, non-irritating and non-sensitizing to individuals with normal skin. However, parabens can cause contact dermatitis to individuals who are sensitive to parabens, which comprise of a small percentage of the general population.

There have been reports on the use of underarm cosmetics containing parabens and possible links to breast cancer. The European Commission's Scientific Committee for Consumer Safety (SCCS) has issued an official statement confirming that there is no evidence of any risk of breast cancer caused by the use of underarm cosmetics, including those that contain parabens. To read the SCCS opinion on parabens safety, visit the website archive of the SCCS.

ASEAN Regulatory Authorities and ASEAN Cosmetics Association (ACA) will continue to review and monitor closely any emerging safety data related to the use of parabens in cosmetic products and will take appropriate action when necessary in order to protect the health and welfare of consumers.

Reference:

1. SCCS/1348/10 Revision 22 March 2011, OPINION ON Parabens COLIPA n° P82, https://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/consumer_safety/docs/sccs_o_041.pdf
2. SCCS/1514/13, OPINION ON Parabens Updated request for a scientific opinion on propyl- and butylparaben COLIPA n° P82, http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/consumer_safety/docs/sccs_o_132.pdf
3. Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety (SCCP/SCCS) Opinion on Parabens: SCCP/0873/05; SCCP/0874/05; SCCP/1017/06; SCCP/1183/08; SCCS/1348/10; SCCS/1446/11
4. CIR Report on Parabens, JACT 3(5):147-209, 1984; IJT 27(S4): 1-82, 2008 . Final Amended Report on the Safety Assessment of Methylparaben, Ethylparaben, Propylparaben, Isopropylparaben, Butylparaben, Isobutylparaben, and Benzylparaben as used in Cosmetic Products, 2008.