

## **CLUW Health Tip Campaign for Safe Personal Care Products**

Are women exposed to toxins by using personal care products? Indeed we are according to the Environmental Working Group, a Washington advocacy organization. They say that the average American woman uses 12 personal care products daily including soap, shampoo, sunscreen, lotion, nail polish, cosmetics, etc. Women are also frequently exposed to hazardous chemicals in the workplace. Exposure to personal care products may interact with workplace exposures and can increase our risk of cancer and birth defects.

The Breast Cancer Fund is one of several groups joining the Campaign for Safer Cosmetics ([www.safecosmetics.org](http://www.safecosmetics.org)). Concern was raised in 2000 when the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that all persons (289) in a test had high levels of phthalates in their bodies. Phthalates are a group of industrial chemicals known to damage the liver, kidney and reproductive systems. They also disrupt hormonal processes believed to affect breast cancer. Phthalates are commonly used in many types of cosmetics. Phthalates have been found in nearly three fourths of perfumes, hair gels and sprays, deodorants and lotions, and other personal products. Unlike drugs, personal care products are not subject to FDA approval and the FDA does not test their ingredients for safety. Manufacturers are not required to list all ingredients on their labels.

The European Union has demanded safer cosmetics and personal care products. In January 2003 European legislation required all companies in the European Union to phase out the use of dangerous chemicals by September 2004. Revlon, Procter & Gamble, Unilever, and Colgate Palmolive are some of the companies that create the same brands of perfumes, soaps, nail polish, shaving cream, etc. for both European and U.S. markets. They are reformulating their products for the European market to make them safer, but originally planned no changes for products they sell in the U.S.

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics is a grassroots campaign asking U.S. companies to make their products safe for the U.S. as well as for Europe. They want them readily available in every market they serve – both domestically and globally. Companies are being asked to sign a pledge that their cosmetic and personal care products will meet the standards set by Europe and thus be free of chemicals known or suspected to cause cancer, mutation or birth defects. Alberto Culver, Sara Lee, Gillette, and many smaller companies have signed this pledge.

CLUW members participated in a survey on this issue at a recent NEB meeting. To sign a petition demanding that companies phase out dangerous chemicals in every market they serve, contact <http://action.safecosmetics.org/petition>. Also contact [www.breastcancerfund.org](http://www.breastcancerfund.org) for more information, or write to them at 2107 O'Farrell Street, San Francisco, Ca. 94115-3419.