



Toxins: Hair Scare

The Brazilian Blowout Hair Treatment Contains Dangerous Levels of Formaldehyde, But the FDA Is Slow to Act

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The popular keratin-based hair-straightening treatment called Brazilian Blowout promises to transform unruly curls into frizz-free, smooth hair for months. It's offered in salons across the nation to women willing to shell out hundreds for a treatment *Vogue* magazine calls "seriously liberating."

But last year, a Portland, Oregon, hairstylist experienced shortness of breath, eye irritation and nosebleeds when using Brazilian Blowout products and filed a complaint with the local Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). OSHA discovered that Brazilian Blowout products contained the toxic carcinogen formaldehyde, despite being advertised as formaldehyde-free. Instead, its ingredient list included methylene glycol, which is what formaldehyde becomes when mixed with water. When the hair treatment is dried under a blow dryer, the methylene glycol reverts back to easily inhaled formaldehyde fumes.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has established that a beauty product is safe for consumers if it contains less than 0.2% of formaldehyde. The Brazilian Blowout Acai Professional Smoothing Solution had 6.3-10.6% levels of formaldehyde, according to OSHA tests. Following a warning from the agency, more salon workers came forward complaining of burning eyes and throats, loss of smell and shortness of breath when performing the treatment. Similar complaints surfaced in Canada, where they have since halted all distribution of the straightener.

Beyond its immediate side effects, formaldehyde exposure has been linked to nose and throat cancer and leukemia. U.S. congressional leaders are calling on the FDA to issue a voluntary recall of Brazilian Blowout and to consider a ban. The "Safe Cosmetics Act," which will be reintroduced this year, could give the FDA the ability to restrict harmful chemicals in beauty products. "All products should be tested for safety before they hit the market," says Jamie Silberberger of Women's Voices for the Earth. "This is standard policy in the food and drug industry."

In light of the controversy, Brazilian Blowout now makes a "Brazilian Blowout Zero" plant-based alternative. The new formula is advertised to work just as well and "releases no formaldehyde before, during or after treatment."

CONTACTS: [Brazilian Blowout](#); [The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics](#).

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