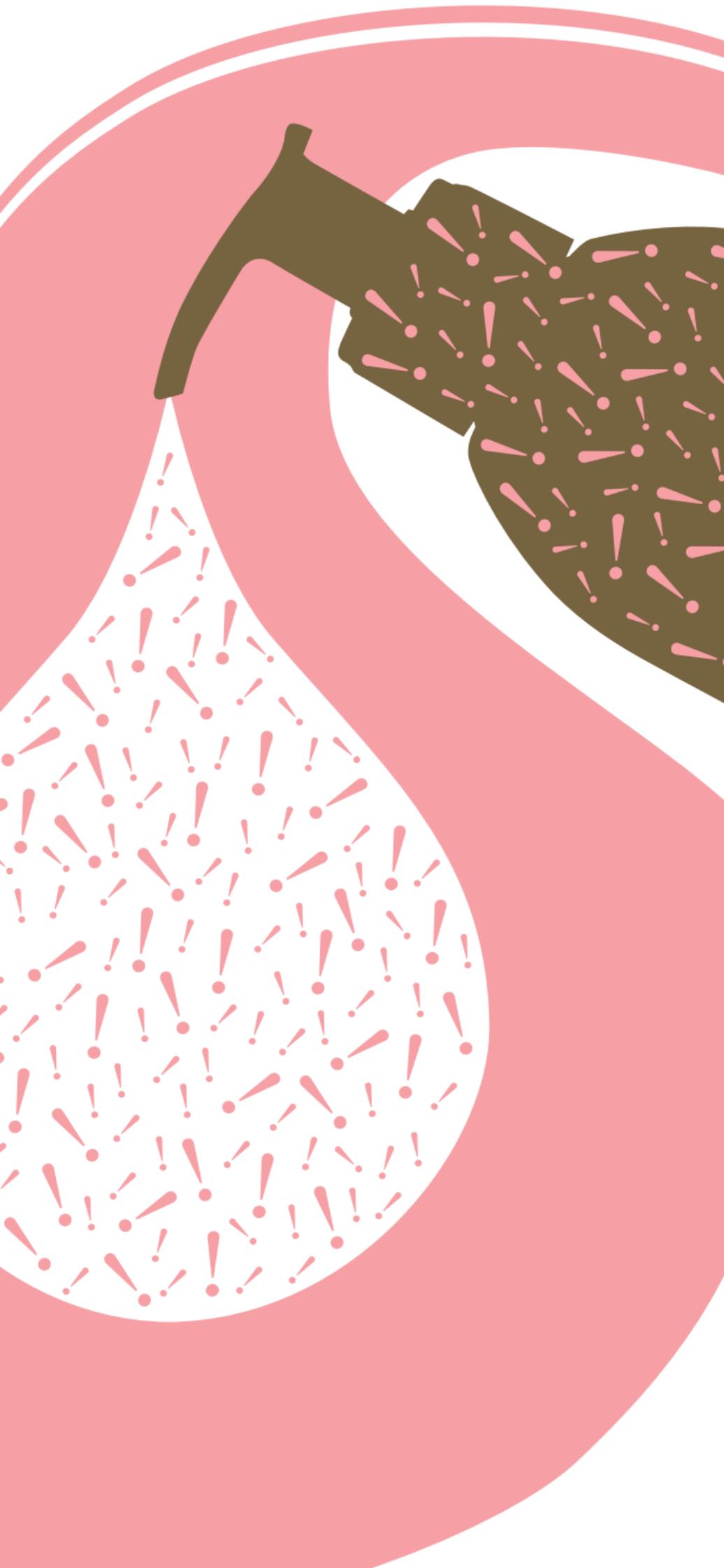
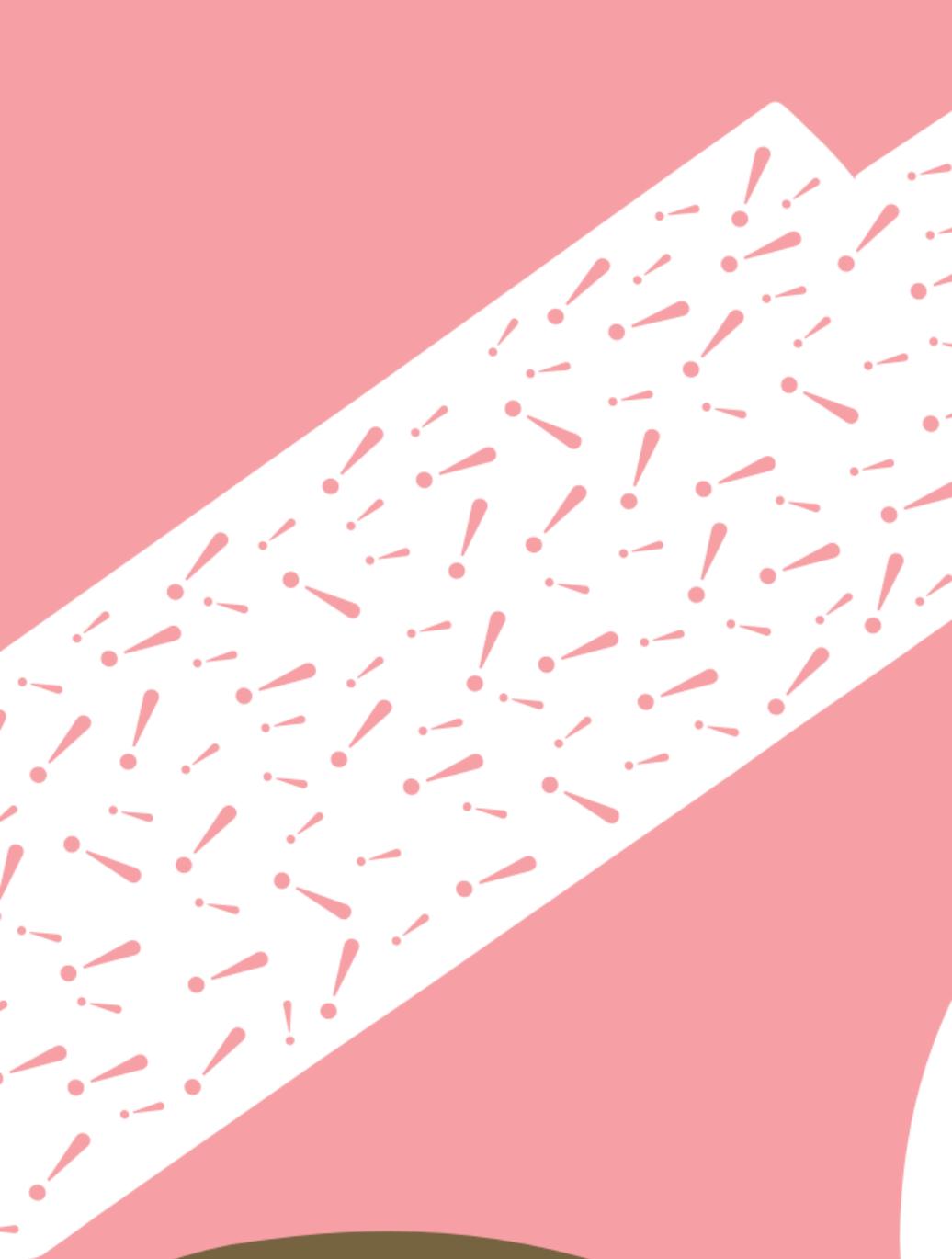


# The Beast of Beauty: Toxic Ingredients in Cosmetics





**C**hemicals that can cause serious health problems are called "toxic." We don't often think of cosmetics, such as make-up and shampoo, as sources of exposure to toxic chemicals that may increase the risk of breast cancer and other health problems. Studies show that some cosmetic ingredients may be toxic. For example, some chemicals in cosmetics act like the hormone estrogen in our bodies; most breast tumours depend on estrogen to grow. This pamphlet provides information about the Canadian cosmetic regulations and how you can use them to protect yourself. It also contains practical tools to help you make informed choices about the cosmetics you buy.

A hand holding a magnifying glass over a document with exclamation marks.

## How is Canada regulating cosmetics?

The sale of cosmetics is regulated under the *Food and Drug Act* and the *Cosmetic Regulations* under the Minister of Health. However, ingredients in cosmetics are mostly regulated by the cosmetic industry and not the government. Changes made to the *Cosmetic Regulations* in 2006 require that all cosmetics and personal care products have an Ingredients list on the label, using the International Nomenclature for Cosmetic Ingredient names, or INCI names. Health Canada also has a list of over 500 prohibited and restricted cosmetic ingredients called the Cosmetic Ingredient "Hotlist."

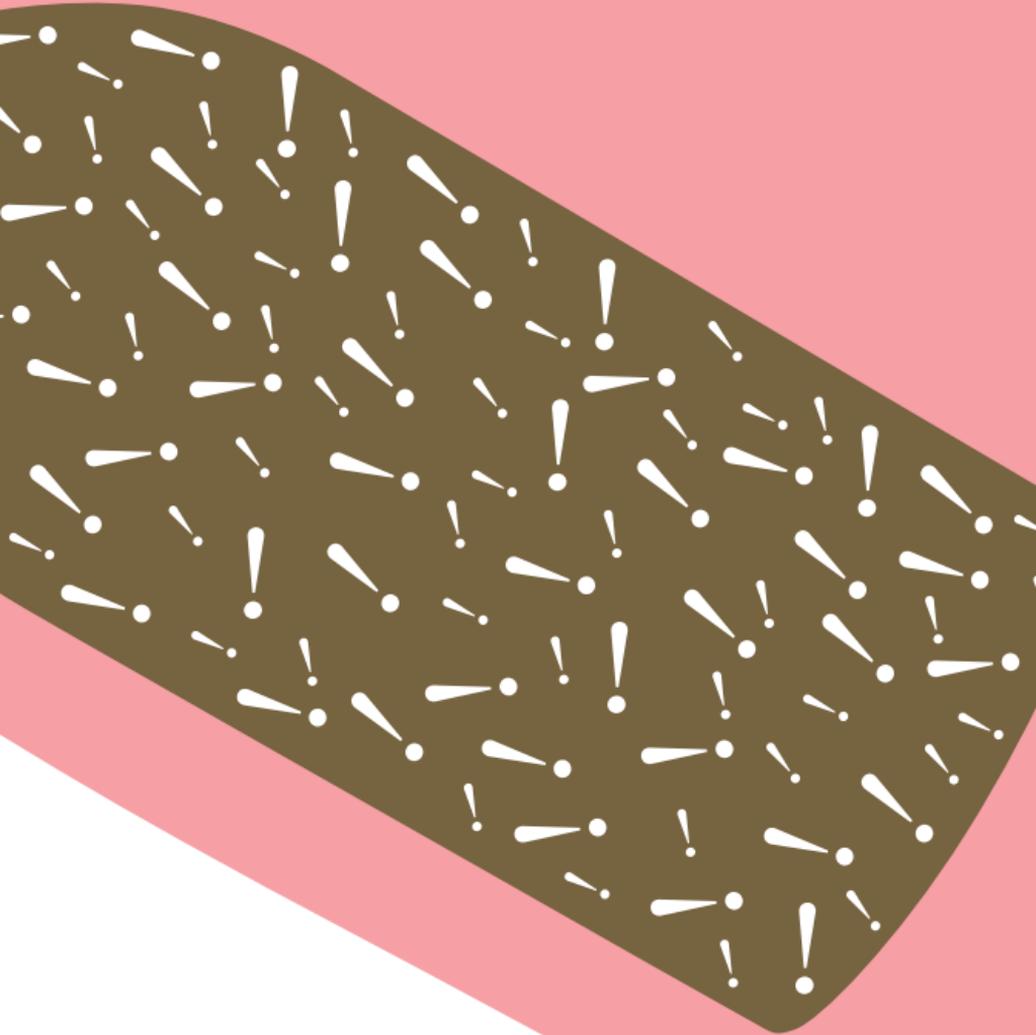


## **If a cosmetic contains a Hotlist ingredient, Health Canada may advise the makers to:**

- \* Remove the ingredient;**
- \* Reduce the concentration of the ingredient;**
- \* Consider marketing the product as a drug;**
- \* Provide evidence that the product is safe for its intended use;**
- \* Confirm that the product is labeled properly;**
- \* Confirm that the product is sold in a child-resistant package.**

## **Some strengths of the regulations:**

- \* With ingredients listed on cosmetics labels, people can find out if the ingredients in the products they are using are toxic by consulting [www.cosmeticsdatabase.com](http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com)**
- \* An ingredient is usually added to the Hotlist if it poses a health risk.**



## Some weaknesses of the regulations are that:

- \* Ingredients in cosmetics are not reviewed for safety before they are put on the shelves. Companies are only required to send an ingredients list to Health Canada ten days after the product goes on the market;
- \* Warning labels are not required for cosmetics that contain chemicals associated with cancer;
- \* The Hotlist does not always consider the long-term, low-dose health effects of cosmetic ingredients;
- \* It does not acknowledge that some combinations of chemicals may be more toxic than each one separately.



**Cosmetic ingredients of concern:<sup>1</sup> some are on the Hotlist and some are not.**

The chemicals listed below are classified as one or more of the following: established human carcinogen, possible human carcinogen, may increase the risk for cancer, skin cancer risk, may be a human reproductive or developmental toxin and/or an endocrine (hormonal) system disruptor.

## Attention: The Hotlist changes.

For updates, consult the Hotlist on Health Canada's website: [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/person/cosmet/info-ind-prof/\\_hot-list-critique/prohibited-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/person/cosmet/info-ind-prof/_hot-list-critique/prohibited-eng.php)

Ingredients of top concern	Usually found in	On the Hotlist?
<b>BHA</b> (butyl hydroxy anisole)	• Many cosmetics	No
<b>Coal Tar Dyes</b>	• Hair dyes	Yes (with exceptions)
<b>Formaldehyde</b>	• Nail treatments	Yes (with conditions)
<b>Petroleum Distillates</b>	• Mascara • Perfume • Foundation • Lipstick	No
<b>Parabens</b> (ex. methylparaben, propylparaben)	• Many cosmetics	No
<b>Phthalates</b> (ex. (dibutyl phthalate; DBP, dibutyl ester; Di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate; DEHP))	• Nail polish • Nail treatments • Fragrances • Perfumes	No
<b>Synthetic Musks</b>	• Fragrances • Cosmetics	Some
<b>Selenium Sulfide</b>	• Shampoo	No
<b>Toluene</b>	• Nail polish • Nail treatments	Yes
<b>Alpha-Hydroxy Acids</b> (AHA)	• Facial cleanser • Skin cream • Moisturizer • Bar soap	Yes (with exceptions)

1. This list was updated by BCAM's Safe Cosmetics Committee July 2008, from the following sources:

- Environmental Working Group, Skin Deep Report: [www.cosmeticsdatabase.com](http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com);
- David Suzuki Foundation: [www.davidsuzuki.org/NatureChallenge/newslettersmay2008\\_greenspa/page2.asp](http://www.davidsuzuki.org/NatureChallenge/newslettersmay2008_greenspa/page2.asp)
- Breast Cancer UK: [www.nomorebreastcancer.org.uk/common\\_carcinogens.html/](http://www.nomorebreastcancer.org.uk/common_carcinogens.html/)
- Health Canada Cosmetics Hotlist

## **Chemicals can build up in your body**

One-time use of a product containing toxic chemicals should not pose a health risk. The problem may come from long-term low-dose exposure to toxic chemicals such as using a product or a combination of products daily, year after year. Some toxic chemicals can build up in our bodies over time.



## **What's in a name? Not always what you think.**

Be skeptical of words like "organic," "natural," and "herbal." Products labeled this way may still contain harmful chemicals. Read the list of ingredients and find out what's in the products you are using and look for an organic certification label.

# Take action!

## Inform yourself about the products you use:

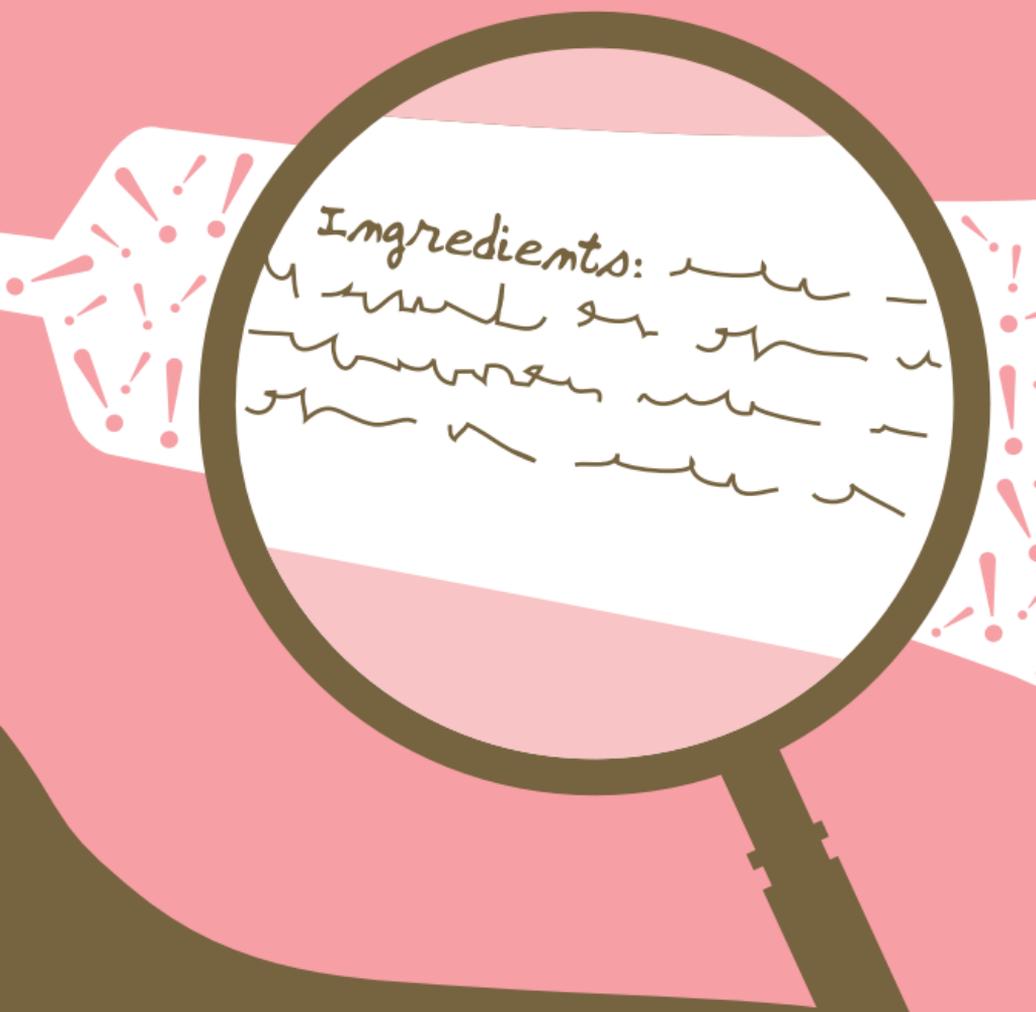
- \* Find out if the products you use are safe by searching the online database called Skin Deep from Environmental Working Group, containing the ingredients and degrees of safety of thousands of popular cosmetics: [www.cosmeticsdatabase.com](http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com)
- \* Check cosmetic ingredient labels and become familiar with Health Canada's "Hotlist."

## Try to limit your use of cosmetics, in particular:

- \* Dark hair dyes;
- \* Nail treatments, polishes and removers;
- \* Products containing synthetic fragrances;
- \* Perfumes.

## Inform others by talking about toxic ingredients in cosmetics to:

- \* Your family, friends, colleagues and community;
- \* Your local store owner or manager, and;
- \* The companies you buy from. Call the companies to voice your concerns about toxic ingredients in their products.



## Write to the government and encourage:

- \* A "Safelist" – cosmetic ingredients we can be sure are safe to use;
- \* Warning labels on all cosmetics that contain chemicals associated with cancer;
- \* Health Canada to review the safety of cosmetic ingredients before they are sold;
- \* Strengthening cosmetic ingredient regulations to ensure that toxic chemicals are eliminated or tightly restricted.

\* Find your Member of Parliament online using your postal code at: [www.parl.gc.ca](http://www.parl.gc.ca)

\* To write Health Canada:  
Minister's Office – Health Canada  
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney Pasture  
Postal Locator: 0906C  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0K9  
[Minister\\_Ministre@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:Minister_Ministre@hc-sc.gc.ca)

## Print and sign BCAM's petition:

- \* [www.bcam.qc.ca](http://www.bcam.qc.ca)

**For more information, visit:**

**Breast Cancer Action Montreal**  
[www.bcam.qc.ca](http://www.bcam.qc.ca)  
5890 Monkland Avenue, Suite 201  
Montreal, Quebec, H4A 1G2  
Tel.: 514.483.1846  
Fax: 514.483.9221



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**For safer cosmetics you can also go to:**

Skin Deep –  
[www.cosmeticsdatabase.com](http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com)  
Guide to Less Toxic Products –  
[www.lesstoxicguide.ca](http://www.lesstoxicguide.ca)

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*Quebec Native Women, Inc.*

*Lesbian Mothers Association of Quebec*

*Relais-Femmes*

*Holistic Acupressure*

*Head and Hands*

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