

# National Medical Association Resolution on Cosmetics and Hair Care Products

-Approved by the House of Delegates  
August 1, 2012

Whereas, unlike food or drug manufactures, a cosmetic manufacturer may use almost any raw material as an ingredient in a cosmetic product, with the exception of color additives and nine specified chemicals, and market the product for consumer use without approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration<sup>1</sup>; and

Whereas, manufacturers are not required to register their cosmetic establishments, file data on ingredients, or report cosmetic-related injuries to FDA, but may do so voluntarily<sup>2</sup>; and

Whereas, FDA does not have the authority to order a cosmetic product recall, but can issue warning letters and, through the Department of Justice, file a lawsuit to seize products that are adulterated or mislabeled if they are sold directly to consumers<sup>3</sup>; and

Whereas, cosmetics and personal care products used by all Americans, regardless of age, gender, race or ethnicity can therefore contain hazardous chemicals such as lead in hair dyes and lipstick; formaldehyde in nail polish and shampoo, phthalates and other toxics in fragrances in soaps, perfumes, moisturizers and shampoo; or coal tars in synthetic coloring or skin creams; and

Whereas, cosmetics and hair care products marketed specifically to girls and women of color contain some of the most toxic ingredients, such as mercury and hydroquinone in skin lighteners or placenta and lye in hair relaxers; and

Whereas, African American women use significantly more shampoo, conditioners, hair oil, relaxers and all other hair care products when compared to white women<sup>4</sup>; and,

Whereas, there are few studies on health effects of hair and personal care products, especially in African American girls and women, but some studies suggest links between hair care products and uterine leiomyomata<sup>5</sup>, premature puberty<sup>67</sup> and cancers.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Cosmetics Q&A: Prohibited Ingredients

<http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/CosmeticsQA/ucm167234.htm>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Food and Drug Administration, FDA Authority over Cosmetics

<http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/ucm074162.htm>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Food and Drug Administration, FDA Authority over Cosmetics

<http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/ucm074162.htm>

<sup>4</sup> James-Todd T, Senie R, Terry MB. "Racial/Ethnic Differences in Hormonally-Active Hair Product Use: A Plausible Risk Factor for Health Disparities", *J Immigr Minor Health*. 2011 May 31

<sup>5</sup> [Wise LA](#), [Palmer JR](#), [Reich D](#), [Cozier YC](#), [Rosenberg L](#). "Hair Relaxer Use and Risk of Uterine Leiomyomata in African American Women", *Am J of Epidemiol*, 1 Mar 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Tiwary, CM, "Premature Sexual Development in Children Following the Use of Estrogen- or Placenta-Containing Hair Products." *Clin Pediatr (Phil)*. 1998 Dec; 37(12):733-9

Whereas, exposure to toxic chemicals in cosmetics is in addition to the disproportionate exposures to toxic chemicals that women of color face from living closer to industrial facilities, highways, and waste sites when compared to white women, as well as the increased likelihood of living in substandard conditions; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved, NMA advocate that everyone in the U.S., especially African American girls and women, have access to safe personal care products regardless of geography or income, and

Be It Resolved, that NMA advocate for the protection of our patients, workers, and the environment from exposure to chemicals linked to cancer, reproductive harm and other adverse health conditions, and

Be It Resolved, that NMA advocate for research into the health effects of hair care products and other cosmetics used disproportionately by African American girls and women, and

Be It Further Resolved that NMA take steps to educate its members, patients, and other interested organizations about this issue.

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<sup>7</sup> Zimmerman PA, Francis GL, Poth M. "Hormone-Containing Cosmetics May Cause Signs of Early Sexual Development." *Mil Med.* 1995; 160(12):628-30