Hair Smoothing Products & Formaldehyde

Some hair smoothing or straightening products contain or release formaldehyde (a chemical).

If you experience a bad reaction to a hair smoothing product, stop using the product and report your symptoms to your health care provider. You can also report your symptoms to the FDA in either of these ways:

1. Read the label.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) discourages consumers from buying and using hair smoothing products containing formaldehyde or related ingredients for home use. If you are buying a hair smoothing product at a store or online, the product is required by law to have a list of the ingredients. If a product doesn’t include a list of ingredients, the FDA recommends that you do not buy the product.

To find out if a hair smoothing product includes formaldehyde-related ingredients, look for:

- Formaldehyde
- Formalin
- Methylene glycol

2. Ask your salon professional.

Ask your salon professional if the product has formaldehyde, and if they have an ingredient list or Safety Data Sheet that you can review. You can also ask if they can use an alternative hair smoothing product that does not release formaldehyde when heated.


If you experience a bad reaction to a hair smoothing product, stop using the product and report your symptoms to your health care provider. You can also report your symptoms to the FDA in either of these ways:

- Contact the Consumer Complaint Coordinator in your area. Locate one here:
  http://www.fda.gov/Safety/ReportaProblem/ConsumerComplaintCoordinators
- Contact MedWatch by phone (1-800-FDA-1088) or online by filing a voluntary report at:
  http://www.fda.gov/medwatch