

# Perfumes and aftershaves

Our sense of smell is linked to our psychological well-being, as anyone who enjoys the scent of freshly mown grass or roasted coffee beans can confirm. Manufacturers of perfumes and aftershaves aim to exploit this link to persuade people to buy their fragrances. Yet there is nothing as natural as mown grass in the average perfume; most contain countless chemicals, none of which legally have to be mentioned on the bottle.

## MESSAGE ON A BOTTLE

Manufacturers tap into the aspirational and escapist part of human nature through their advertising campaigns and branding, which suggest an association between a particular fragrance and a glamorous lifestyle. However, the image fostered by the perfume manufacturers is largely illusory. Apart from the dream and a briefly lingering scent, what we are really being sold in our bottle of perfume is nothing more than a container of unnamed chemicals. What is more, many of these chemicals may be harmful.

Manufacturers of perfumes choose from about 8,000 ingredients, and any one bottle may contain as many as 5,000 chemicals. But trying to discover which ingredients are in each perfume is almost impossible. Perfume recipes have so far been protected from compulsory labelling by the highly effective lobbying of multinational companies. These companies have claimed that perfumes contain 'too many ingredients' to list. Without compulsory labelling the fragrance industry relies heavily on self-regulation. However, the potential health and

environmental risks associated with some of the ingredients regularly found in fragrances suggests that this situation is inadequate.

## HEALTH RISKS

Many ingredients in perfumes, such as benzene derivatives, are associated with health risks. In particular, perfumes can cause headaches, asthma and sinus problems, and a conservative estimate suggests that 2 per cent of the population have a skin allergy to fragrances. There are even suspicions that the phthalates in fragrances could lead to male infertility, and other chemicals in perfumes may be carcinogenic.

The lack of transparency compounds the problems that consumers face when choosing a perfume. Even careful searching cannot help a consumer to avoid known irritants. Until the laws relating to the testing and transparency of perfume ingredients are revised, consumers would be best advised to seek out products with a high proportion of essential oils. Or you could try the cheaper and safer option of using your own pheromones to attract attention.

## SMELLING A RAT?

Some perfumes contain ingredients cruelly derived from animals, such as musk (a dried secretion from the preputial follicles of the musk deer), civet (taken from the scent glands of the Ethiopian civet cat), ambergris (taken from sperm whales), and castor (from follicles near the genitals of beavers). Animal substances are often used as fixatives, and therefore are not essential to the fragrance itself. Synthetic substitutes for these ingredients exist and enable companies such as Dolma to guarantee that their perfumes are made with no cruelty towards animals.

Manufacturers have also been accused of harming the environment in their search for

fragrance ingredients, Friends of the Earth campaign against companies buying talc mined from the Indian rainforest, which damages the habitat of the tiger.

## TARGETING THE KIDS

Child protection authorities have criticised the perfume industry for marketing scents at children. Since 1995, Versace, Agnes B, Nina Ricci, Givenchy and Guerlain have all introduced perfumes for children aged 4 to 15. Some watchdog groups have expressed a fear that the premature sexualisation of children in certain advertisements could legitimise and encourage sexual interest in children.



- Amethyst Mist
- Sirius



- Activist
- Aramis
- Cacharel
- Calvin Klein
- Chanel
- Christian Dior
- Estee Lauder
- Gucci
- Opium
- Ralph Lauren
- White Musk
- Youth Dew



- Lynx
- Old Spice
- Revlon

PERFUMES AND AFTERSHAVES BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT				ANIMALS		PEOPLE			OTHER		Company group	Score	
	ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	GM	ORGANIC	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	VEGETARIAN	ARMAMENTS	IRRESPONSIBLE MARKETING	POLITICAL DONATIONS	PUBLIC RECORD CRITICISMS	BOYCOTT			ETHICAL ACCREDITATION
BODY SHOP ACTIVIST	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	L'Oreal Group	50
AMETHYST MIST	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	Dolma	82
ARAMIS	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	The Estee Lauder Companies Inc	68
CACHAREL	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	L'Oreal Group	50
CALVIN KLEIN	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	Phillips-Van Heusen Corporation	54
CHANEL	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	Chanel	57
CHRISTIAN DIOR	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	LVMH	57
ESTEE LAUDER	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	The Estee Lauder Companies Inc	68
GUCCI/OPIUM	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	PPR	61
LYNX	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	Unilever	46
OLD SPICE	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	Procter & Gamble	25
RALPH LAUREN	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	L'Oreal Group	50
REVLON	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	MacAndrews & Forbes Holdings Inc	46
SIRIUS	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	Dolma	82
BODY SHOP WHITE MUSK	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	L'Oreal Group	50
YOUTH DEW	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	The Estee Lauder Companies Inc	68

Key

- Top rating
- Middle rating
- Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation

# Sanitary protection

It has been estimated that the average woman will throw away 250 to 300lb worth of sanitary protection, and use up to 15,000 tampons during her lifetime. This, and other expenses on sanitary protection, will cost her over £150 a year. Part of this expense is likely to be down to the 'every-day panty liner', a relatively new product that has been successfully marketed on the somewhat controversial claim that it is intrinsic to 'daily freshness'.

## BIG BRANDS

The sanitary protection market is dominated by one company, Procter & Gamble, who produce the well known brands Tampax, Always and Allday. This large and extensive company has been criticised for less-than ethical practices in relation to the environment and animal welfare. Fortunately, alternatives are available, and they are well worth seeking out because they reduce health and environmental concerns to a near-zero.

## HEALTH

Manufacturers estimate that 10 per cent of women have permanently deserted the tampon due to fears of the blood infection Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). This is a rare but painful, and potentially fatal, disease. 99 per cent of TSS cases are found in women wearing rayon-blend tampons, the most common kind. Natracare does 100 per cent cotton tampons, which may therefore be safer.

The superabsorbent polyacrylate gel AGM was banned from tampons in 1995 because of links to TSS, but it is still used in some towels. The main safety issue arises from the temptation to change gel-filled towels less frequently, causing a build-up of bacteria. Additionally, a Canadian study on babies' nappies found that when dry, AGM powder can travel up the urethra to the kidneys and cause scarring.

The Women's Environmental Network (WEN) has campaigned on the issue of GM cotton in tampons and towels. Aside from the environmental objections to modification of the cotton crop, the organisation is concerned about potential alterations in absorbency levels increasing the risk of TSS, and about the potential transfer of antibiotic resistance marker genes.

Using disposable sanitary products risks putting toxins next to your skin or vaginal tissue. Some residues, such as pesticides and dioxins from the bleaching process, have been linked to birth defects, reproductive disorders, depressed immunity and cancer.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Casual flushing of sanitary protection waste means that much of it ends up in rivers and sewage outfalls, acting as a breeding ground for diseases and potentially being mistaken by sea mammals for prey. Otherwise, it festers in landfill sites, where it takes six months for a tampon to degrade. Plastic packaging and applicators may persist indefinitely in the environment. Reusable sanitary protection, such as the Keeper, washable sanitary towels, and sponges are the best environmental option as there are no disposal issues to consider.

The percentage of waste paper pulp in tampons and towels has increased during the last ten years, but it has recently taken a dive again due to a move away from recycled products to a focus on premium ones. Manufacturers play to the fact that around half of women declare themselves prepared to pay more if they sense a higher quality and comfort level – hence the extra wings, gels and gauzy layers that keep appearing.

ALTERNATIVES

For those who are concerned about sanitary waste ending up in landfill, there are now a number of eco-friendly mail-order companies that produce washable sanitary towels.

It may also be worth considering the menstrual cup, made by companies such as Mooncup. The cup is re-usable, which makes it a financially and environmentally viable option, and it does not contain any harmful chemicals and substances, which means it has not been linked to Toxic Shock Syndrome.

Another good alternative to traditional tampons and pads are a disposable range available from Natracare. Natracare tampons are made from certified organic cotton and are non-chlorine bleached. Organic cotton removes the risk of direct exposure to residues from chemical pesticides and fertilisers used on traditional cotton. In addition to tampons, they produce sanitary pads and liners made from biodegradable, chlorine-free cellulose and Bioplastics. See [www.mooncup.co.uk](http://www.mooncup.co.uk) and [www.natracare.co.uk](http://www.natracare.co.uk)

SANITARY PROTECTION BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT				ANIMALS				PEOPLE				OTHER				Company group
	GM	ORGANIC	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	VEGETARIAN	ARMAMENTS	IRRESPONSIBLE MARKETING	POLITICAL DONATIONS	PUBLIC RECORD	BOYCOTT	ETHICAL ACCREDITATION	ETHICAL COMPANY INDEX	Score	Company group			
ALLDAYS	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	29	Procter & Gamble		
ALWAYS	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	29	Procter & Gamble		
BODYFORM	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	75	Svenska Cellulosa AB (SCA)		
CAREFREE	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	33	Johnson & Johnson		
HELEN HARPER	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	71	Ontex		
KEEPER	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	75	The Keeper Company		
KOTEX	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	58	Kimberly Clark		
LIBRESSE	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	75	Svenska Cellulosa AB (SCA)		
LIL-LETS	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	67	Lil-Lets Group (Electra Partners LLP)		
LUNAPADS	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	75	Lunapads International		
MANY MOONS PADS	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	83	Many Moons Alternatives		
MOONCUP	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	83	Mooncup Ltd		
NATRACARE	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	88	Bodywise (UK) Ltd		
SEA PEARLS TAMPONS	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	75	Jade & Pearl, Inc		
SOFT-TAMPONS	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	67	JoyDivision		
TAMPAX	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	29	Procter & Gamble		

Key  
 ● Top rating  
 ○ Middle rating  
 ● Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation (2009)

**GOOD SHOPPING GUIDE ETHICAL COMPANY**

- Bodyform
- Libresse
- Many Moons Pads
- Mooncup
- Natracare

**?**

- Kotex
- Lil-lets
- Soft-tampons
- Helen Harper
- Keeper
- Lunapads
- Sea Pearls Tampons

**X**

- Alldays
- Always
- Carefree
- Tampax

# Shampoo and conditioner

Elaborate hair care is intrinsic to the modern beauty routine, even though some claim that all it really needs is soap and water. Shampoo and conditioner manufacturers often succeed in seducing even the conscious consumer with their apparently 'natural' or 'organic' products, but we should not always believe what we read on the label. Choose companies whose ethical claims have been verified by the BUAV and the Soil Association – and by the Ethical Company Organisation.

## THE NATURAL LOOK

Over the past few years, booming interest in organic produce has caused the mainstream cosmetics companies to flirt heavily, and successfully, with the natural image in launching their new product lines. This corporate romance with nature can be criticised as a cheap attempt to appear ecologically sound, as the few token 'natural' ingredients invariably mask the usual chemical cocktail. Alternative groups have called for Elida Fabergé to withdraw or rename its Organics line until all ingredients are certified organic. Of course, alternative producers have long been proclaiming the benefits of natural ingredients, with product lines true to their principles.

## SUDS LAW

The long list of ingredients on the back of a shampoo bottle can be hard to decipher without specialist chemical knowledge. A commonly-used shampoo ingredient, due to its propensity to foam, is sodium

laurel sulphate, or its milder form sodium laureth sulphate. Claims about the former's damaging health effects point to it being an allergen, with symptoms including skin and eye irritation. Industry replies to such concerns emphasise that these chemicals are used in measured amounts that have been legally decreed as safe for use.

Dandruff is a problem that many people are tackling with medicated shampoos. Anti-dandruff shampoos can contain potentially toxic chemicals and can even aggravate the problem. Eating foods that contain the right fats – such as raw nuts and cold-pressed vegetable oils – is one way to address the imbalance.

## ANIMAL TESTING

Some companies skirt around the issue of animal testing, and at the same time keep themselves open to new ingredients, by adhering to the 'five-year rolling rule'. This means that five years must have elapsed since the ingredient was tested on animals. Naturewatch and the BUAV support use of

the 'fixed cut-off date', whereby companies refuse to use ingredients tested on animals after a certain date.

## ALTERNATIVES

In the days before shampoo, people resorted to more imaginative methods of achieving glossy locks. Soap was used as an all-round cleanser for hair and body, but as water has become more alkaline (hard) its effectiveness has declined, leaving hair rough and tangled. In areas with a soft water supply, using a plain soap with conditioner is an option. Otherwise adding something acidic to soap, such as vinegar or lemon juice, can neutralise the hard water. If you follow up with conditioner, your hair should

be left healthy. It is possible to dispense with shampoo completely. However, many people find the transitional period unpleasant, as the scalp's naturally-produced oils (washed out by shampooing) kick back into action.

For a slightly easier option, try shampoos and conditioners from the companies that have been accredited by the Ethical Company Organisation. Green People, Hemp Garden, Honesty and Natura Organics are all members of the accreditation scheme, which indicates that they are ethically and environmentally compassionate. See the Good Network section at the back of the book for more information on these companies and how to buy their products.



- Botanics
- Faith in Nature
- Green People
- Hemp Garden
- Honesty
- Natural Organic Soap
- Natura Organics
- Neem Care
- Weleda



- Body Shop
- Henara
- L'Oreal
- Original Source
- VO5



- Aussie
- Head and Shoulders
- Organics
- Pantene Pro-V
- Superdrug

# GOOD HEALTH & BEAUTY

SHAMPOO AND CONDITIONER BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT				ANIMALS				PEOPLE				OTHER				Company group
	ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	GIM	ORGANIC	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	VEGETARIAN	ARMAMENTS	IRRESPONSIBLE MARKETING	POLITICAL DONATIONS	PUBLIC RECORD CRITICISMS	BOYCOTT	ETHICAL ACCREDITATION	ETHICAL COMPANY INDEX				
AUSSIE	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	32	Procter & Gamble
BODY SHOP	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	86	L'Oreal Group
BOTANICS	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	71	Boots Group Plc
FAITH IN NATURE	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	86	Faith Products
GREEN PEOPLE	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	92	Green People Company
HEAD AND SHOULDERS	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	32	Procter & Gamble
HEMP GARDEN	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	79	Hemp Garden Ltd
HENARA	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	61	Henkel
HONESTY	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	89	Honesty Cosmetics
L'OREAL	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	50	L'Oreal Group
NATURA ORGANICS	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	86	Villa Natura
NEEM CARE	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	79	Bioforce
ORGANICS	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	46	Unilever
ORIGINAL SOURCE	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	68	PZ Cussons
PANTENE PRO-V	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	32	Procter & Gamble
SHAMPOO & CONDITIONER BARS	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	86	Natural Organic Soap
SUPERDRUG	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	46	Hutchison Whamoa
V05	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	○	57	Alberto Culver
WELEDA	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	79	Weleda Group

## Key

- Top rating
- Middle rating
- Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation



Oy!

organic young

no gunk

natural

certified organic

fairly traded

from green people

not tested on 

No chemical nasties.  
Recyclable packaging.  
Kind to the environment.  
[www.organicyoung.com](http://www.organicyoung.com)



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# Skincare

Even though the big cosmetics firms love to use the word ‘natural’ on their products, most skincare creams use man-made chemicals, some of which are potentially toxic. Consumer groups have expressed concern about ‘bio-accumulation’, where chemicals build up in our systems because we do not have the capacity to get rid of them. The only way to ensure the safety of what we buy is to look at the small print behind the slogan.

## HOW NATURAL?

Lack of proper industry regulation means that a product can be called ‘natural’ even if it contains as little as 1 per cent natural ingredients. Most skincare creams contain dozens of synthetic and chemical ingredients, many of which are a potential cause for concern.

Specific ingredients that are probably best avoided include: propylene glycol, formaldehyde, ammonia derivatives (diethanolamine, triethanolamine and monoethanolamine), alpha hydroxy acid and benzoic acid. Of these, propylene glycol (also found in industrial form in antifreeze and brake fluid) has been associated with kidney damage, alpha hydroxy acid has been linked with damage to skin cells, and formaldehyde is a known irritant.

Skin irritation is a common complaint with cosmetics. Irritation and allergies tend to be more common in people with eczema, asthma and hay fever, and usually involve the appearance of inflammation, itchiness or redness. As all cosmetics have the potential to cause a reaction if enough people use

them, warnings tend to be given only for high-risk products such as hair dyes. Synthetic chemicals such as propylene glycol are known to cause problems for sensitive individuals. Fragrance-free skincare creams, and those which are made from certified natural ingredients, are less likely to irritate the skin.

## BIO-ACCUMULATION

According to Friends of the Earth, our bodies are on average contaminated with 300 man-made chemicals. Many of these chemicals ‘bio-accumulate’, meaning that they aren’t broken down by the body. Some can also interfere with the hormone system and may cause cancer. The long-term effects of these chemicals are so far unknown and, more worryingly, even if they were found to be harmful, our bodies would be unable to eliminate them. Friends of the Earth believes that these chemicals should be identified, then phased out and replaced with safer alternatives as soon as possible.

ANIMAL TESTING

The labelling of cosmetics products may imply that they have not been tested on animals, when in fact the opposite is the case. Even if a finished product has not been animal tested, the ingredients used to make it may have been. When a company says ‘we don’t test our products or ingredients on animals’, it could mean that someone else is doing the testing for them. Equally, the statement ‘against animal testing’ doesn’t necessarily mean the company puts this into practice. Manufacturers will often use these vague statements as a way of concealing their (and their suppliers’) involvement in practises that the consumer may not agree with.

The only way to guarantee a cruelty-free cosmetic is to look for the BUAV’s rabbit and stars symbol, which confirms that the product meets the Humane Cosmetics Standard and for this reason a green dot is given to companies.

PACKAGING

A particular problem with moisturisers is the amount of packaging they create. Most brands use plastic packaging, which is most likely to end up in landfill, with only a small amount being recycled or incinerated. Culpeper is one of the rare brands that uses glass to package its skincare products. The Body Shop used to refill old bottles, although these days not every shop offers this facility (and we have concerns over their parent company since the takeover!).



- Aromatherapy Direct
- Bulldog
- Essential Care
- Fushi
- Green People
- Honesty
- Natural by Nature Oils
- Oy!
- Weleda



- Aveda
- Boots
- Clarins
- Culpeper
- Hemp Garden
- Lush
- Nivea
- Origins
- Ponds



- Body Shop
- E45
- L'Oreal
- Neutrogena
- Oil of Olay

SKINCARE BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT		ANIMALS		PEOPLE		OTHER		Company group					
	ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	GM	ORGANIC	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	VEGETARIAN	ARMAMENTS	IRRESPONSIBLE MARKETING		POLITICAL DONATIONS	PUBLIC RECORD	BOYCOTT	ETHICAL ACCREDITATION	ETHICAL COMPANY INDEX
AROMATHERAPY DIRECT	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	88	Aromatherapy Direct
AVEDA	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	63	The Estee Lauder Companies Inc
BODY SHOP	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	58	L'Oreal Group
BOOTS	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	63	Alliance Boots Plc / KKR
BULLDOG	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	83	The Little Wing Trading Company Ltd
CLARINS	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	63	Clarins Group
CULPEPER	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	75	Von Essen Hotels Ltd
E45	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	○	●	○	○	54	Reckitt Benckiser
ESSENTIAL CARE	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	88	Essential Care (Organics) Ltd
FUSHI	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	92	Fushi Wellbeing Ltd
GREEN PEOPLE	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	92	Green People Company
HEMP GARDEN	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	79	KWD Products Ltd
HONESTY	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	92	Honesty Cosmetics
L'OREAL	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	58	L'Oreal Group
LUSH	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	79	Lush Ltd
NATURAL BY NATURE OILS	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	100	Natural by Nature Oils Ltd
NEUTROGENA	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	33	Johnson & Johnson
NIVEA	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	67	Beiersdorf AG / Maxingvest
OIL OF OLAY	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	○	○	29	Procter & Gamble
ORIGINS	○	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	63	The Estee Lauder Companies Inc.
OY!	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	92	Green People Company
PONDS	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	63	Unilever
WELEDA	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	83	Weleda Group

Key

- Top rating
- Middle rating
- Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation (2009)

# Soap

Most people probably wouldn't want to wash themselves with a petrochemical-fragranced bar of animal fats, but these ingredients may be contained in even the simplest bar of soap – and they might not be easy to identify on the label. Fortunately, some smaller manufacturers make their soaps to vegetarian or vegan standard, using natural essential oils for scent, dried flowers for colour and herbs for exfoliation. Hand-made and cruelty-free, these are an ideal alternative.

## INGREDIENTS

Soap is made from animal or vegetable fats, oils or grease, and forms when the fats interact with an alkali. Preservatives, salts, colours, perfumes, moisturisers and emulsifiers may then be added, with the more adventurous brands including fruits, spices and essential oils. Traditionally, soaps were produced from animal fats such as fish oils or tallow, listed in the ingredients as 'sodium tallowate'. The Vegan Society describes tallow as 'hard animal fat, especially that obtained from the parts about the kidneys of ruminating animals'. Although there are vegetable alternatives, many of the major soap brands still contain animal fats and consequently are not suitable for vegetarians or vegans.

Vegetable soaps may also contain added ingredients such as honey, lanolin and milk, preventing them from being suitable for vegans. Lush, Caurnie, Suma, Faith and Body Shop soaps are all suitable for vegetarians. Caurnie and Faith soaps are all vegan, while all except Suma's honey soaps

are suitable for vegans. The Body Shop produces a list of its 'vegan non-friendly' products and Lush clearly labels those soaps which are suitable for vegans.

*The Good Shopping Guide* can recommend Caurnie, Ecosoapia, Hemp Garden and Natural Organic Soap, all of whom received particularly good marks in the survey and have been accredited by the Ethical Company Organisation.

## MAKING SOAP CLEANLY

Most of the bigger brand soaps are made from a common soap bar, manufactured by large commercial producers who sell it on in the form of dried soap nodules to individual soap makers for reprocessing.

Soaps made by the 'alternative' producers, such as Caurnie, Faith and Suma, are hand-made, which provides employment and promotes traditional soap-making techniques. According to information from Suma, the cold saponification process used by Suma and Caurnie is more energy-efficient, as 'all the ingredients remain in

the mix, with only such heat input as is required to raise the temperature of the mix to body heat’.

A commercial processor may use a boiling process which could consume up to 65kw hours of electricity and 15 tonnes of water in producing one tonne of soap. The alternative soap makers claim that commercial products extract the glycerine, selling it as a by-product, instead of leaving it in the soap. Since glycerine is a natural moisturiser, this explains why many soaps can dry the skin.

**SYNTHETICS AND PACKAGING**

Most of the major soaps contain synthetic (petrochemical-based) ingredients, but many of the smaller producers use natural

ingredients, such as essential oils, rather than artificial fragrances to scent their soaps. The synthetic ingredients used by the larger companies are often irritants for sensitive skin.

The packaging used by the major brands is often excessive, with Imperial Leather (the UK’s best-selling soap) using three wrappers, including a box. In comparison, Suma’s soap is sold completely loose and just wrapped in a brown envelope, and other sellers such as Caurnie have made a commitment to using only minimal packaging.

Bits of soap that are too small to be used for washing can be kept in a soap jar, and dissolved in hot water to make a soft jelly for washing-up.

SOAP BRAND NAME	ENVIRONMENT				ANIMALS		PEOPLE			OTHER			Company group	
	ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT	GM	ORGANIC	NUCLEAR POWER	ANIMAL WELFARE	VEGETARIAN	ARMAMENTS	IRRESPONSIBLE MARKETING	POLITICAL DONATIONS	PUBLIC RECORD	BOYCOTT	ETHICAL ACCREDITATION		ETHICAL COMPANY INDEX
BODY SHOP	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	50	L’Oreal Group
CAMAY	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	32	Procter & Gamble
CAURNIE SOAPS	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	86	Caurnie Soap Co
DOVE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	46	Unilever
ECOSOAPIA	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	93	21st Century Health
FAIRY	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	32	Procter & Gamble
FAITH IN NATURE	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	86	Faith Products Ltd
HEMP GARDEN	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	79	KWD Products
IMPERIAL LEATHER	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	68	PZ Cussons
LUSH	●	●	●	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	79	Lush Ltd
NATURAL ORGANIC SOAP	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	79	Natural Organic Soap
NIVEA	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	64	Beiersdorf AG
PALMOLIVE	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	○	●	○	46	Colgate-Palmolive
PEARL	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	68	PZ Cussons
PEARS	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	46	Unilever
SIMPLE	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	○	64	Beiersdorf AG
SUMA	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	89	Suma Wholefoods

- GOOD SHOPPING GUIDE ETHICAL COMPANY**
- Caurnie Soaps
  - Ecosoapia
  - Faith in Nature
  - Hemp Garden
  - Lush
  - Natural Organic Soap
  - Suma

- ?**
- Body Shop
  - Imperial Leather
  - Nivea
  - Pearl
  - Simple

- X**
- Camay
  - Dove
  - Fairy
  - Palmolive
  - Pears

**Key**  
 ● Top rating  
 ○ Middle rating  
 ● Bottom rating

Source: The Ethical Company Organisation