

The Safety of Phenoxyethanol

Phenoxyethanol is a [preservative](#) used in a wide range of cosmetic products – from shampoos, to cosmetic wipes, to body lotions. It is one of the preservatives of choice for some private natural and organic certification bodies. It has been used safely in lots of consumer products, including cosmetics, for many years, and can be found in green tea.

Preservatives play an essential role in keeping cosmetics safe against spoilage and contamination by micro-organisms during storage and continued use. This is important for consumer safety.

Phenoxyethanol has a maximum permitted use level in cosmetics (1%), but generally preservatives are used at the lowest level to achieve the intended aim of protecting cosmetic products from contamination. Only those preservatives specifically allowed by the authorities can be used in cosmetic products in the EU.

Consumer well-being is the number one priority and the safety of all cosmetic products and their ingredients is governed by strict European [laws](#), which require a [safety assessment](#) be carried out on each product before it is made available for use by the consumer.

In addition, a more detailed assessment is required for any cosmetic product which is intended to be used on children under three years of age. The assessment takes into account the finished product and all of the ingredients as well as how and where the product is to be used, by whom and how often.

As well as this, there are robust processes in place so that cosmetic ingredients and their safety are kept under constant review by the European Commission and EU countries, assisted by the Commission's independent scientific expert committee (the [Scientific Committee for Consumer Safety](#), SCCS). It is the SCCS which establishes the scientific justification for allowing any particular preservative to be used in cosmetics.

SCCS Scientific Opinion October 2016

Following a request by the French authorities, the SCCS was asked to review the safety information on phenoxyethanol. The SCCS has re-confirmed the safety of phenoxyethanol when used as a preservative in cosmetic products, including baby wipes and other children's products up to 1% (October 2016).

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