

I'm Pregnant.....

How can I protect myself and my pregnancy if I keep my job at the Hair Salon?

As a hair salon employee, you work with products that may contain potentially harmful chemicals. These chemicals can get into your body if you inhale them, if they pass through your skin or you eat them. You can reduce your exposure to the chemicals that may be harmful for your pregnancy. This fact sheet offers guidance on the methods that can be used to lower the chemical exposures in your salon to levels that are as low as reasonably achievable. These strategies will help you protect your health, your pregnancy and your job.

What chemicals are in the products I use?

There are hundreds of chemicals used in hair styling products. This summary represents an overview of some of these chemicals. Not all hair salon products contain the chemicals listed below. Always check your products' labels and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) for specific information on the chemicals used in your salon.

Shampoos and Conditioners: Shampoos contain detergents and additives such as fragrances and preservatives (possibly **formaldehyde**). Conditioners contain proteins and silicones.

Hairstyling products Hairstyling products contain film-forming agents that hold the shape of the hair (such as **polyvinylpyrrolidone (PVP)**), solvents that carry the film onto the hair (**alcohols**) and propellants if the product is an aerosol.

Hair Bleaches: Hair bleaching products contain chemicals that lighten the hair's pigment (**hydrogen peroxide**). Bleaches may also contain activators (**ammonium hydroxide**) and chemicals that boost the bleaching activity (**ammonium persulfate**).

Permanent Hair Dyes: Permanent hair dyes are usually a two part preparation- the dye (**aromatic amines** such as **para-phenylenediamine (PPD)**) and a fixing agent (usually **hydrogen peroxide**).

Permanent Waving and Straightening: There are two steps involved in "perming" or straightening hair. First the hair is softened with a solution that breaks the chemical bonds in the hair (**ammonium thioglycolate**). After the hair has been wound on rollers to achieve the desired result a neutralizing agent (**hydrogen peroxide**) bonds the hair in its new shape.

Will the chemicals I use in the hair salon harm my pregnancy?

Since all salons are different, the amount of contact you have with chemicals will vary. The amount you breathe in or absorb through your skin will depend on:

- the amount of the chemical in the products you use
- how often you use the products and how many hours you work
- the type of ventilation or air system in your workplace.
- the type of protective equipment you are using

Although studies have shown that some hair care products may cause dermatitis, respiratory illnesses and possibly cancer, there have been very few studies on what happens during pregnancy when hairdressers use these products at work. When researchers looked at hairdressers as a group, work in a salon does not appear to significantly increase a woman's risk for having a baby with a birth defect. The chemicals found in most shampoos, conditioners and hair bleaches do not appear to have recognized hazards to fetal development. However, some animal studies have found associations between PPD exposure (a component of some hair dyes) and fetal abnormalities, while others have not.

Researchers have investigated the association between adverse pregnancy outcomes and specific salon tasks. Working long hours (≥ 35 hours/week), standing for long periods of time (≥ 9 hours a day), performing frequent chemical services (≥ 13 /week) and using formaldehyde based disinfectants were associated in one study with a slightly increased risk of miscarriage in a population of hairdressers who worked during their first trimester. The use of gloves when working with chemicals appeared to protect workers in this study. A second study reported that although hairdressers may have had an increased risk of miscarriage in the past, the study's newer data did not point to an increased miscarriage risk. The authors suggest that changes in dye formulas and improved working conditions may explain this better outcome. In another study, the frequent use of permanent waving and hair spraying products was associated with the slower growth of developing babies.

Because there are so few studies in this area, and some of the results are inconclusive, we recommend that pregnant hair salon employees minimize the amount of time they spend working with permanent wave solutions, hair sprays and permanent hair dyes. In addition, we recommend that the use of all hair salon chemicals be reduced to levels that are **as low as reasonably achievable**. We also encourage you to have periods of rest.

If exposures are controlled, you should be able to continue working

How can my hair salon control my exposure to chemicals?

- ❖ **As much as possible you should minimize the amount of time you spend working with permanent wave solutions, permanent hair dyes and hair sprays. Instead, we recommend that you focus on tasks such as washing, conditioning, cutting and bleaching hair.**
- ❖ **Your salon should have fresh air.**
 - If there are windows in the salon, they could be kept open.
 - Your salon could install an air handling system that brings fresh air into the building.

Remember: *Small table fans do not help because they do not direct vapors out of the work area. In general, air purifiers don't work either.*

- ❖ **In the area where chemicals are mixed your salon should have local exhaust ventilation** (a system that captures and removes contaminants before they are released into the work area)
- ❖ **You should protect yourself from exposure to hairdressing products by wearing gloves and by washing your hands when your skin comes in contact with these products.**

To minimize skin exposure you should wear the gloves that are recommended by the manufacturer of the products you use.

- ❖ **You should use good work practices.**

When you use hair styling products you should use pump sprays or wet styling aids rather than aerosol sprays, when possible. This will reduce the chance that you will breathe in the chemicals in these products.

You should cover your trash and your products' containers when they are not in use.

- ❖ **If your hair salon has a nail care area, please review the companion fact sheet on reproductive hazards and nail salons for additional protective measures.**
- ❖ **Your salon should provide you with training on how to minimize exposure to chemicals.**

Health and safety training is very important. The training will give you the opportunity to learn about what your salon is doing to reduce your exposure to chemicals. For more information on Hair Salon Health and Safety, contact the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health (860-509-7749) for a list of groups that can provide assistance and training.

How can my hair salon insure that I get periods of rest?

- ❖ **You should limit the amount of time you spend standing and you should take frequent breaks.**

The information in this pamphlet is intended for general reference purposes only and is not intended to address specific medical conditions. Readers are encouraged to confirm the information contained herein with other sources. It is not the intention of these factsheets to provide specific medical advice, but rather to provide users with information to better understand workplace exposures. This information is not intended to be used as a substitute for professional medical advice or a medical exam.

© 2009 University of Connecticut Health Center.

This sheet may be reproduced by clinicians' offices only for the purposes of individual patient guidance

**For additional information please contact the
Connecticut Pregnancy Exposure Information Service (CPEIS) toll-free at 1-800-325-5391**

This work was produced by the Divisions of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
and Human Genetics of the University of Connecticut Health Center