

2

TALC USE FOR BABY & ADULTS DANGEROUS

Dear Dr. Meinig:

I recently read an article that said not to use talcum powder for babies because it contained asbestos fibers. If that is so, what can be used? E.H.

Dear E.H.:

I had not heard before that talcum powder contained asbestos. It took some researching before I found an article published in 1971 that appeared in the British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, that stated that most talcs contain some asbestos contaminant. The article written by Dr. Keith Griffiths, Director of Cancer Research in Cardiff, Wales, was titled, "Talc and Carcinoma of the Ovary and the Cervix."

The researchers found particles of talc in approximately 75% of ovarian tumors, and 50% of the cervical tumors of patients examined. Talc, being the main ingredient in talcum and baby powders and a wide variety of other cosmetics, including certain hygiene sprays, may be a cause of cancer. Dr. Griffiths felt that because most talcs contain asbestos fibers, ~~that~~ it was probably the asbestos in the products causing the lesions.

While the researchers felt more studies should be made, the findings of the large number of lung cancers in asbestos workers in more recent years, substantiate their contention. In addition, the chemical formula⁴⁵ of both talc and asbestos are very much alike. Both are hydrated magnesium sili-

cates with slightly different formulas. Both are mined from the earth and separated from the rocks that contain them.

Not only do asbestos workers die of lung cancer, but talc workers are known to suffer talcosis, a disease that scars the lungs.

Doctors stopped dusting rubber surgical gloves with talc because many were developing skin granulomas on their fingers. Women frequently dust birth control diaphragms with talcum, ^{not to mention babies when changing diapers.} This potentially dangerous practice is still going on.

Another possible problem with talcum products is that they sometimes contain small portions of aluminum silicate. ⁱAluminum absorption is responsible for a number of toxic illnesses.

There are some other skin dusting powders that are purported to be safe to use instead of talc. Corn starch is frequently used as a skin dusting powder because of its absorbant properties. Inasmuch as many people are allergic to corn, other starches such as potato, rice, and wheat, have been advocated. The quality of any of these starches is dependent on the purity of the water used in making them, and whether the person is allergic to such products.

In view of these reports, it seems ^M~~A~~ imperative that the use of talc products be promptly discontinued, and any on hand be tossed out with the garbage.