

Health

Dyes and tints can't equal the 'au naturel'



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Dear Dr. Meinig: I have dyed my hair for years but the last couple of times my scalp and hands became red and itchy, and my eyes swelled. After rinsing my hair and washing my hands these symptoms went away. The thought of going around with grey hair is very disturbing. Are there some vitamins I could take to eliminate the problem? Should I try another brand? A.F.

Dear A.F.: Don't try other brands or use antihistamines as a preventative, as you could end up with a severe case of dermatitis, have your vision affected, experience trouble breathing and even pass out. Risking a trip to the emergency room isn't worth it.

The cosmetics industry lobbied Congress during the late 1930s to exempt hair dyes from regulation, so women are on their own regarding their safety.

Many home-type dyes and most professional products have metallic substances that contain paraphenylenediamine and other chemicals. They have such names as oxidation dyes, para dyes, peroxide dyes and amino dyes. P-



phenylenediamine helps the color penetrate directly into the hair shaft. It has been demonstrated by dermatologists that six percent of the population is sensitive to the chemical. This may seem like a small number but it does mean six out of every hundred.

"The chemical P-phenylenediamine interacts with the immune system, which mounts a response to get rid of it," says Arthur P. Bertolino, director of the Hair Consultation Unit at New York University Medical Center. "People will get a rash, redness, scaliness, oozing, sometimes even blistering. Occasionally, someone extremely allergic can lose considerable amounts of hair, or even get scarring."

Lead is another ingredient that appears in some hair dyes. While the amounts that are absorbed through the skin are small, they are accumulative. Grecian Formula is a common one containing lead. The use of these dyes is compounded by what we receive ecologically from auto exhaust, newsprint,

etc.

Selenium is another contaminant. It is an essential element in trace amounts but some scientists are concerned that its presence in hair dyes could result in absorption through the scalp's skin, causing dangerously high doses to be absorbed. To my knowledge, no studies have substantiated these fears. Selsun Blue is a popular dye that contains selenium.

Vitamins are not known to be able to offset the problems of hair dye chemicals. However, nutrient deficiencies are recognized as reasons for the loss of hair color. What vitamins, minerals and other factors are involved, along with how a small number of people have restored the color of their hair, will be covered in next week's article.

You aren't abnormal to want to keep the grey at bay, nor to be imbued with a desire to remain youthful in appearance. However, it would be well to reflect how handsome and attractive are men and women whose smiling faces are topped with well-groomed grey or white hair. Dyes and tints, no matter how well done or youthful appearing, cannot equal the glow, the grace, and the refinement of "au naturel."

Everyone has a question about nutrition. Send yours to Dr. George E. Meinig, c/o Ojai Valley News, Box 277, Ojai, CA 93024.