
PRESERVATIVES

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WHAT ARE PRESERVATIVES? WHAT ARE THEY USED FOR?

Preservatives are substances of natural or synthetic origin whose principal role is to prevent physicochemical degradation and growth of microorganisms (bacteria, yeasts and fungi) in cosmetic products. Most preservatives are synthetic substances belonging to various chemical groups (halogen-containing compounds, aldehydes, parabens, glycol ethers, organic acids). Preservatives are also very widely used to prevent microorganism contamination of foodstuffs and medicines. Preservatives are absolutely indispensable for ensuring the protection of certain categories of cosmetic products (lotions, creams, etc.) since microorganism contamination may occur during manufacture (water, air, packaging materials) or repeated use by the consumer. Cosmetic products have a long shelf life (6 to 24 months after first opening) and, unlike perishable foodstuffs, are stored at room temperature. A cosmetic product that is poorly protected and contaminated may induce health risks for the consumer.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS?

Despite the essential role of preservatives in the protection of cosmetic products, their benefit is regularly contested. Preservatives are accused of inducing allergies and playing a role in the emergence of certain forms of cancer, and are singled out as endocrine disruptors.

The number and concentration of preservatives used in cosmetic products are very limited and strictly controlled by numerous international regulations. The safety data on those preservatives are very regularly reviewed by the scientific experts of the international health authorities in order to take the most recent studies into account. The concentrations used in cosmetic products may then be adjusted in order to prevent potential impacts on consumer health.

WHY IS THE PROTECTION OF L'ORÉAL COSMETIC PRODUCTS SAFE?

We use a very limited number of preservatives selected for certain specific categories of cosmetic products when protection against microorganisms cannot be ensured by any other means. The preservatives and their concentrations are rigorously selected to ensure the correct level of microbiological protection of the product under study, in strict compliance with the international regulations, while ensuring perfect safety for the consumer.

We have also developed an proactive innovation strategy in the field of the microbiological protection of formulae consisting of: 1) synthesizing new preservatives endowed with an irreproachable safety profile and 2) developing specific packaging systems and new formulations that are not vulnerable to microbiological contamination

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