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# PARABENS

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## **WHAT ARE PARABENS?**

Parabens are a series of preservatives that are very widely used to ensure the protection of foodstuffs, medicines and cosmetic products from microbiological contamination (bacteria and fungi). The parabens used in cosmetic products are of synthetic origin but they also exist naturally in certain foods such as red fruit, vanilla, carrot and onion, and in foodstuffs prepared from plants, some cheeses, products produced by bees (propolis, royal jelly) and in the human body.

## **WHY ARE PARABENS INDISPENSABLE IN CERTAIN COSMETIC PRODUCTS?**

Parabens are very useful for ensuring the protection of numerous categories of cosmetic products (lotions, emulsions, creams) since they are very effective at low concentrations against bacteria and fungi, are heat-stable and act synergistically with other preservative groups.

In this group, ethyl and methyl parabens (short chains) are the most widely used, frequently in combination, while butyl and propyl parabens (long chains) are less used.

## **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS?**

The use of parabens in cosmetic products has been controversial for several years. Due to the ability of parabens to bind to estrogen receptors in vitro, the preservatives were suspected of a potential effect on reproduction in humans and on estrogen-dependent cancers such as breast cancer. The affinity of parabens for the estrogen receptor is, however, approximately 1 million times weaker than that of the estrogen (estradiol-17 $\beta$ ) present in the human body and no impact on human health has been formally demonstrated to date.

## **WHY ARE L'ORÉAL PRODUCTS CONTAINING PARABENS SAFE?**

The scientific experts of the various international health authorities very recently reviewed all the toxicological data available on the 4 parabens (ethyl, methyl, propyl and butyl parabens) used in cosmetic products and confirmed that they could be used in all safety by consumers, while adjusting the concentrations for use of each of the parabens.

We never compromise on the quality and safety of our products. Microbiological protection is one of the components of product quality and safety. Parabens have been used for several decades in certain categories of our cosmetic products and only when indispensable to ensure effective microbiological protection. The products then mainly contain ethyl and methyl parabens, which have a particularly positive safety profile. The concentrations of those parabens are rigorously defined in order to procure the correct level of microbiological protection for the product under study, in strict compliance with the international regulations, while ensuring perfect safety for the consumer. We have also developed an offensive innovation strategy designed to develop specific packaging systems and new formulations that are markedly less vulnerable to microbiological contamination, thus enabling limitation of the use of preservatives, including parabens.

**L'ORÉAL**