
ENDOCRINE DISRUPTORS

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WHAT ARE ENDOCRINE DISRUPTORS?

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines endocrine disruptors as '*chemical substances of natural or artificial origin foreign to the body which may interfere with the functions of the endocrine system and consequently cause adverse health effects in an intact organism or its progeny*'. An endocrine disruptor is thus a substance or mixture of substances that interacts with the hormone system and induces, by that mechanism, adverse effects on health. In contrast, substances that interact with the endocrine system without the interaction inducing any adverse effect on health should not be considered endocrine disruptors. The study of endocrine disruption and its impact on human health has been the subject of very great scientific research interest as over 4000 scientific articles have been published since 1990. The subject remains highly controversial today. The parties involved (NGO, media and consumer associations) insistently demand that the substances which only interact with endocrine systems, with no proven impact on human health, should be the subject of regulatory prohibition pursuant to the principle of precaution. None of the substances targeted fulfill the WHO definition however.

ARE THERE ENDOCRINE DISRUPTORS IN OUR PRODUCTS?

Our products do not contain endocrine disruptors as officially defined by the WHO. Numerous substances used in various industrial sectors, such as the chemical, agrochemical, food and consumer product industries, have been singled out as endocrine disruptors. The substances are frequently accused of inducing disorders of metabolism, growth and reproduction, and hormone-dependent cancers due to their interactions with the hormone systems. Certain substances present in cosmetic products such as phthalates, triclosan and parabens have been the target of repeated attacks on the simple basis of a known interaction with various hormone receptors in cell culture models. However, no valid scientific study has yet confirmed that the hormone interactions give rise to adverse effects on human health.

HOW CAN THE SAFETY OF INGREDIENTS BE ENSURED IN THIS CONTEXT?

We have incorporated the issue of endocrine disruptors in the innovation dynamics through our policy of anticipation. The substances used in our products have a safety assessment evidencing that they do not have the characteristics of endocrine disruptors as defined by the WHO. On the basis of the intensity and pertinence of the weak scientific and societal signals for certain ingredients, we may nonetheless decide to no longer use them in our products, restrict their use, or restrict them to particular product categories even though the current international regulations authorize their widespread use. In parallel, we have set up, for the selection of our new ingredients, a considerable platform of predictive tests, not using laboratory animals, enabling detection of the ability of ingredients to interact with certain hormone receptors we wish to avoid. Our innovation dynamic thus incorporates the fundamental principle of anticipation in which any risk that is not yet scientifically proven or is only perceived by society is not neglected in the safety assessment. This ensures that our consumers can use our products with every confidence.

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