

Cancer-linked chemicals found in hair products marketed and sold to women of color by Sally Beauty

New analysis of more than 550 products finds formaldehyde-releasing chemicals and siloxanes in items disproportionately marketed to Black and brown consumers

SEATTLE, WA, UNITED STATES, March 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- An independent analysis released today

by Toxic-Free Future finds that more than one in six of the hair products

reviewed (17%) sold by Sally Beauty and marketed primarily to Black and brown women for textured hair contain chemicals linked to cancer and other serious health harms.



Toxic-Free Future examined ingredient labels for 577 hair products marketed for curly (Type 3) and coily (Type 4) hair on the company's website and found that 17% of products contained chemicals that release formaldehyde and/or the siloxanes D4, D5, or D6. Specifically:

“

No one should have to risk their health to care for their hair.”

Cheri Peele, Director of Government and Market Policy at Toxic-Free Future

- Nearly one in eight products contained chemicals that release formaldehyde, a known carcinogen linked to leukemia and rare throat cancers.
- About one in 14 products contained siloxanes (D4, D5, or D6), chemicals linked to cancer, reproductive and

developmental toxicity, endocrine disruption, and liver harm.

Washington state will restrict formaldehyde releasers in cosmetics beginning in January 2027. The European Union has already restricted certain siloxanes and will further limit them in leave-on cosmetic products in 2026.

“No one should have to risk their health to care for their hair,” said Cheri Peele, Director of Government and Market Policy at Toxic-Free Future and lead researcher on the analysis. “We identified chemicals linked to cancer in products disproportionately marketed to and used by

Black and brown women. If Sally Beauty can remove these chemicals in Washington and Europe to meet regulatory requirements, it can extend those same health protections to customers nationwide.”

[Peer-reviewed research has linked](#) frequent use of certain hair products to [increased risks of breast and uterine cancer in women](#), particularly Black and brown women who disproportionately use these products. Communities of color already face higher cumulative exposure to toxic chemicals from multiple sources, and the continued sale of hazardous chemicals in hair products compounds those risks. And these products are more likely to be marketed to and used by Black consumers.

“The presence of chemicals linked to cancer and hormone disruption in hair products sold in a beauty supply store where communities of color frequently shop is concerning,” said Dr. Marissa Chan, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, whose research examines the local availability of harmful hair products and impacts on health. “Research, including my own work examining toxic chemicals in hair products used by communities of color, suggests these exposures are not isolated. These products are often used regularly over many years, and repeated exposure may increase the risk of health problems including cancer and reproductive outcomes, some of which disproportionately impact Black women.”

“Women of color are disproportionately impacted by the toxic ingredients found in many personal care products, some of which are sold by Sally Beauty,” said Jordana Vanderselt, MPH, Director of Environmental Health at WE ACT for Environmental Justice. “This company claims to manage their environmental impact and take care of the communities in which they operate, but the fact that they sell these products marketed to communities of color undermines these claims. Sally Beauty needs to take immediate action to uphold beauty justice and stop selling products that contain harmful ingredients.”

Sally Beauty operates 47 stores in Washington and maintains retail operations in several European countries, meaning the company is facing restrictions on products containing these chemicals in certain markets. Other states, including New York, Colorado, California, Oregon, and Vermont, have either passed or are considering bills that restrict the use of toxic chemicals such as formaldehyde, formaldehyde releasers, and certain siloxanes in cosmetics and personal products.

Toxic-Free Future has reached out to Sally Beauty multiple times in recent months and over several years to discuss reducing toxic chemicals in beauty products, but has received no response.

For five consecutive editions of Mind the Store’s Retailer Report Card, Sally Beauty has received a failing grade for lacking a comprehensive safer chemicals policy. In comparison, other top beauty retailers Sephora and Ulta Beauty have launched safer chemicals policies and have disclosed

progress restricting toxic chemicals in beauty products in recent years. Sephora, and Ulta Beauty, along with beauty companies like Credo and Counter, have joined with ChemFORWARD to form the Know Better Do Better Collaborative, an initiative to advance safer chemistry and improve access to chemical hazard data to enable informed decision-making. The Collaborative has published two ingredient intelligence reports for the beauty sector identifying chemicals of concern, safer chemicals, and chemicals for which there is no data.

With more than 3,700 stores worldwide and billions in annual revenue, Sally Beauty has significant purchasing power and influence over manufacturers.

Toxic-Free Future and WE ACT are calling on Sally Beauty to restrict formaldehyde releasers and siloxanes in products from all stores and online platforms and to adopt and implement a comprehensive safer chemicals policy. In conjunction with the new analysis, the groups today launched an online petition telling Sally Beauty CEO Denise Paulonis: "It's time for a healthy makeover." Consumers can take action by telling Sally Beauty to stop selling hair products made with toxic chemicals. People can also reduce exposure by avoiding hair products labeled with formaldehyde releasers and siloxanes including D4, D5, and D6. See Toxic-Free Future's consumer tips and ingredient list to watch for.

Collection and analysis of data from the Sally Beauty website was a collaborative effort of Toxic-Free Future and WE ACT for Environmental Justice, with further analysis on hair products by Toxic-Free Future. Hazard information was derived from the Chemical Hazard Data Trust managed by ChemFORWARD.

TOXIC-FREE FUTURE

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Press Release: <https://toxicfreefuture.org/press-room/cancer-linked-chemicals-found-in-hair-products-marketed-and-sold-to-women-of-color-by-sally-beauty/>

Stephanie Stohler

Toxic-Free Future

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