

# Health Alert for Beauty Salon Owners and Workers: Hair Straightening Products and Formaldehyde



If you or anyone in your salon uses hair straightening products, here is some important information for you to consider. A group of hair straightening products known as “Brazilian Keratin Treatment” (BKT) may contain formaldehyde.

Exposure to formaldehyde can cause irritation of the eyes, nose, throat, and skin. People with asthma

or other respiratory diseases may be more sensitive than others to the effects of breathing formaldehyde. Formaldehyde is classified as a known human carcinogen (cancer-causing chemical). Formaldehyde exposure in some occupations has been linked to cancer of the nasal passages and upper throat.

The amount of formaldehyde exposure you get depends upon the product, your technique as a stylist, and ventilation in the salon.

The hair straightening products that were tested and shown to contain formaldehyde are listed below. There are more than 150 hair straightening products on the market, and we do not know how many others may contain formaldehyde. You can't count on the label. Some products were labeled “formaldehyde-free,” “organic” or “natural,” but were found to contain formaldehyde when tested.

## *How are you exposed to formaldehyde?*

You can breathe in formaldehyde when the product container is opened, when the product is applied to a client's hair, or when the product is heated on the client's hair with high temperature blow dryers and flat irons. You can be exposed when it is being used on other clients in the salon. Salon workers may continue to be exposed multiple times, as they perform each treatment or each time a treatment is performed in the salon.

## *What products contained formaldehyde?*

Formaldehyde was measured in the products listed below. Remember that there are many products on the market and most have not been tested, so we do not know how many others may also contain formaldehyde.

- *Brazilian Blowout Solution*
- *Brazilian Blowout Acai Professional Smoothing Solution*
- *Brazilian Gloss Keratin Smoothing Gloss*
- *Cadiveu Brazilian Thermal Reconstruction*
- *Coppola Keratin Complex Smoothing Therapy, Natural Keratin Smoothing Treatment*
- *Coppola Keratin Complex Smoothing Therapy, Natural Keratin Smoothing Treatment, Light Wave*
- *Coppola Keratin Express Brazilian Smoothing Treatment*
- *Coppola Keratin Complex Smoothing Therapy*
- *Global Keratin Functional Keratin Hair Taming System Light Wave Chocolate*
- *Global Keratin Taming System Strawberry*
- *Global Keratin Taming System with Juvexin Strawberry Resistant*
- *Global Keratin Taming System with Juvexin Strawberry Light Wave*
- *IBS Beauty IStraight Keratin Advanced Keratin Treatment*
- *Kera Green Keratin and Protein Hair*
- *Marcia Teixeira Advanced Brazilian Keratin Treatment*
- *Marcia Teixeira Brazilian Keratin Treatment*
- *Marcia Teixeira Chocolate, Extreme De-frizzing Treatment*
- *Pro-Collagen RX Keratin Treatment*
- *QOD GOLD Solution*

## *Who tested these hair straightening products?*

Oregon OSHA (health and safety program), Health Canada and the European Directorate-General of Health and Consumer Affairs did the testing and found formaldehyde in most of the products they tested. They also conducted air tests during application of one of the products in two salons and found that formaldehyde had been released into the air.

## *What kind of chemical is formaldehyde?*

At room temperature, formaldehyde is a colorless, flammable gas that has a distinct, pungent smell. It is also known as methanal, methylene oxide, oxymethylene, methylaldehyde, and oxomethane. When mixed with water, it may be referred to as methylene glycol or formalin (formalin is another name for embalming fluid). You may see one of these names on a product label, but you may not.

## *What actions are being taken to deal with this concern?*

- The New York State Department of Health is monitoring the situation and we are in contact with other states about their experiences with these products. Through this fact sheet, we are taking the precautionary step of alerting salon workers and consumers about the hazards. At this time, we know that 51 companies market a total of 156 products. Over one hundred of those are widely distributed in NY. This year alone, seven new products have come on the market. We have no reliable way at this time to know which ones contain formaldehyde.
- The FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration – responsible for regulating cosmetic products) is gathering reports from consumers and salon professionals about eye irritation, breathing problems and headaches.
- The Oregon Department of Consumer Business Services and the Connecticut Department of Public Health issued alerts on the release of formaldehyde from these products.
- The Attorney General of the State of California filed a lawsuit against a California-based manufacturer of one of these products (Brazilian Blowout's Acai Professional Smoothing Solution) alleging that the manufacturer failed to warn users about the presence of formaldehyde as required by California regulations.
- Health Canada issued an advisory about the release of formaldehyde from the Brazilian Blowout product. Health Canada also received complaints of burning eyes, nose and throat, breathing difficulties and a report of hair loss.
- The European Directorate-General of Health and Consumer Affairs banned the sale of some products and recalled others.

Consumers and salon professionals are urged to report adverse experiences to FDA in either of the following ways:

1. Report to the nearest FDA district office. The phone number for the NY State Complaint Coordinator is **(866) 446-9055**.



## *What should I do if I am concerned about my health because of using these products?*

First, consider not using the products. Seek medical attention if you are experiencing health problems.

2. Report online to FDA's MedWatch adverse event reporting system at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/medwatch/>. You also may call Medwatch at **(800) 332-1088** to request a reporting form by mail.

You may also wish to contact the regional office of the federal Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA):

**Occupational Health and Safety Administration**  
201 Varick Street, Room 670  
New York, New York 10014  
(212) 337-2378

## *What if I have other questions?*

If you have other questions, you can call the New York State Department of Health at **(518) 402-7900** or toll-free at **(800) 458-1158**, or write to us at:

**New York State Department of Health**  
**Center for Environmental Health**  
**Flanigan Square**  
547 River Street, Room 230  
Troy, New York 12180

The Department can also give you contact information for the NYS Occupational Health Clinic in your area. These clinics can provide a medical consultation on formaldehyde or any work-related health problem. For more information on the clinics:

[http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/workplace/clinic\\_network.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/workplace/clinic_network.htm)