FORMALDEHYDE

also called…formalin, formic aldehyde, methanal, methyl aldehyde, methylene oxide, oxomethane, oxyethylene, morbicid acid. Formaldehyde is released by these common preservatives: quaternium-15 (Dowicil or 1-(3-chloroallyl)-3,5,7-triaza-1-azonia-adamantane-chloride), DMDM hydantoin (Glydant or 1,3-dimethylol-5,5-dimethylhydantoin), diazolidinyl urea (Germall II), imidazolidinyl urea (Germall, imidurea), 2-bromo-2-nitropropane-1,3-diol (Bronopol), and in industry tris nitromethane (Tris Nitro).

What is it?
Formaldehyde is a disinfectant and preservative.

Where might it be found?
- Make-up remover, toner
- Moisturizing cream, lotion
- Make-up, concealer, powder
- Blush, bronzer
- Mascara, eye pencil, shadow
- Shampoo, body cleanser
- Hair conditioner, tonic, spray
- Hair styling gel, mousse
- Sunscreen, sunless Tanner
- Body powder, talcum powder
- Mouthwash
- Aftershave, antiperspirant
- Bubble bath, liquid soap
- Feminine hygiene spray, rinse
- Nail polish, cuticle remover
- Fingernail hardener
- Dishwashing liquid, cleaner
- Laundry starch, anti-static
- Facial tissue
- Moistened tissue, baby wipes
- Paper, paper products, pulp
- Newsprint, cardboard
- Magazines, glazed paper
- Grocery sacks, plastic bags
- Wet-strength paper towels
- Currency, paper money
- Photocopier toner
- Root canal disinfectant
- Orthopedic casts
- Foam insulation
- Bonded leather
- Fire-resistant clothing
- Fertilizer
- Pet care products

How to avoid it:
To eliminate exposure to formaldehyde, check the complete ingredient list of each product you use.
- Check prescription medicines and creams too.
- Look for any of the names above.
- For products already at home with no ingredient list, go to the store and inspect the original box or package.

Ask your hairdresser, manicurist, physician, nurse, and others to avoid using products containing formaldehyde-related ingredients in your care.

To identify possible workplace exposure, check the complete ingredient list of each product you encounter. It may be necessary to contact the manufacturer to learn if some form of formaldehyde is present. (continued)
**Additional possible sources:**

**Foods:** Some formaldehyde allergic persons experience flares when they eat or drink these items: aspartame (NutraSweet, Equal), coffee (especially instant), maple syrup, cod fish, smoked ham, dried bean curd, shiitake mushrooms, and caviar. Formaldehyde may remain on vegetables and fruits treated for mildew prevention.

**Skin products:** Herbal or botanical extracts and essential oils may contain traces of formaldehyde left over from the extraction process. It will not be named as an ingredient.

**Clothing:** It is possible to come in contact with formaldehyde in phenolic resins and urea plastics in jewelry, buttons, and footwear. Skin friction and sweating may leach formaldehyde from certain fabrics. Ask your doctor if you should also avoid clothing and bed linens made of such fabrics.

**Paper and textiles:** Formaldehyde is used in many paper products to improve resistance to water, grease, and shrinkage. Additionally, some non-woven fibers carry residual formaldehyde from their production. These may be found in disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, and tampons; sterile gowns, caps, drapes, and masks; household and personal wipes; dryer sheets; interlining; upholstery and carpet fabric, padding, backing; wall fabric; agricultural coverings and seed storage; filters, envelopes, tags, labels; insulation; roofing products; and geotextiles.

**Wood:** Building materials such as particle board, MDF, and plywood contain urea-formaldehyde glues. Sawdust from these materials may produce dermatitis.

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**Formaldehyde-releasing preservatives may be present in some prescription skin products:**
- Atopiclair
- Benzoyl peroxide wash
- Calcipotriene cream
- Clobetasol propionate emollient cream
- Crotamiton lotion
- Fluticasone cream and lotion
- Halobetasol propionate cream
- Hydrocortisone 2.5% lotion
- Ketoconazole shampoo
- Permethrin cream
- Tretinoin emollient cream
- Unna’s boot

**Some safe alternatives:**

There are many preservatives that are not related to formaldehyde. Unless you have also tested allergic to them, these should be safe: phenoxyethanol, iodopropynyl butylcarbamate, paraben, methylchloroisothiazolinone and methylisothiazolinone, and methyl dibromoglutaronitrile.

Formaldehyde-free products include Marcal paper goods, Grumbacher art paper, and Boncour acrylic paint. Organic cotton free of formaldehyde is available from many sources.

[Quaternium compounds other than quaternium-15, such as quaternium-18, do not release formaldehyde and do not cross-react. Recently the formaldehyde releaser sodium hydroxymethylglycinate did react.]