

why make your own natural soaps

The majority of the bath soaps and shower gels that you find on the High Street today are not true soaps at all and we have thoughtlessly taken to bathing and showering with these products not knowing what they are or more importantly what they contain. These products are really synthetic detergent bars or 'beauty bars' – as they are called – made from chemicals and are usually much harsher on sensitive skin than true soaps.

Synthetic detergents and beauty bars contain petroleum distillates and many other ingredients that you cannot even pronounce and if they do contain anything substantial, chances are the quantity is too minute to enhance the finished product significantly. Genuine soaps are made from high proportions of natural oils such as coconut, olive, cocoa butter and palm which produce a gentle cleansing and moisturising product that is better suited for use on your skin than these synthetic detergents. Instead of natural fats and oils, commercial manufacturers replace this oil with petroleum distillates and strip the naturally produced glycerin from their soaps thus stripping your skin of its natural oils and potentially causing lots of skin problems.

Detergents are popular because they have high foaming action and do not leave the scum that tends to form when true soap reacts with calcium in hard water. The commercial/industrial soap makers, together with their advertising machinery, would have you believe that true soaps are not good for you.

The beautiful, transparent, commercially-produced soaps you see for sale claiming to be 'glycerin bars' do not contain real glycerin. These soaps are made with propylene glycol which is not the same as natural glycerin and it is not good for your skin. Commercial manufacturers can claim that these soaps are made from vegetable glycerin even if only a small proportion of vegetable glycerin and a high percentage of propylene glycol are used in the formulation. These soaps also contain many other toxic petrochemicals and some people with skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis find they are exacerbated by these commercial soaps.

commercial soap ingredients

Most consumers do not read the ingredients list on the packaging of the product and most do not know the purpose of these chemicals. Soap and detergent share similarities in their capacity to emulsify fats and oils and suspend dirt but apart from that they are compositionally different because of the high quantities of surfactants and the long list of other chemicals used in the production of detergents. For the purpose of illustration have a look at the ingredients of a commercially-produced beauty bar intended for sensitive skin. I have listed the ingredients below for you.

Sodium Cocoyl Isethionate, Stearic Acid, Sodium Tallowate, Water, Sodium Isethionate, Coconut Acid, Sodium Stearate, Cocamidopropyl Betaine, Sodium Cocoate, Sodium Palm Kernelate, Sodium Chloride, Titanium Dioxide, Sweet Almond Oil, Rosewood Oil, Tetrasodium Edta, Trisodium Etidronate, Bht, Cedarwood Oil, Rose Oil, Disodium Cocamido-Mea-Sulfosuccinate, Cetyl Alcohol, Tocopheryl Acetate

Sodium Cocoyl Isethionate is a surfactant; the sodium salt of the coconut fatty acid ester of isethionic acid derived from coconut oil.

Stearic Acid is a surfactant and an emulsifying agent, a fatty acid from animal or vegetable source such as palm oil.

Sodium Tallowate is the sodium salt of tallow acid (beef fat), and tends to clog pores and cause blackheads.

Water

Sodium Isethionate is an anti-static cleanser.

Coconut Acid is a surfactant and a mixture of fatty acids derived from *Cocos Nucifera* (Coconut) Oil.

Sodium Stearate is the sodium salt of stearic acid, a surfactant and emulsifying agent.

Cocamidopropyl Betaine is a fatty acid derived from coconut oil, an anti-static agent and foam booster.

Sodium Cocoate, Sodium Palm Kernelate is the sodium salt of coconut acid or palm kernel respectively; it is a surfactant and emulsifying agent.

Sodium Chloride is table salt and a viscosity increasing agent.

Titanium Dioxide is a white colourant.

Sweet Almond Oil is a skin conditioning agent.

Rosewood Oil is a fragrance ingredient; *Aniba Rosaeodora* (Rosewood) Wood Oil is the volatile or essential oil obtained from the wood of the tree *Aniba rosaeodora*.

Tetrasodium Edta is a chelating agent; there is concern about this item as it enhances skin absorption, skin irritation and organ system toxicity.

Trisodium Etidronate – one or more animal studies show kidney or renal system effects at moderate doses.

Bht (Butylated Hydroxytoluene) is a toluene-based preservative which is said to cause contact dermatitis; is a substituted toluene, an anti-oxidant and is linked to developmental/reproductive toxicity, organ system toxicity and skin irritation.

Cedarwood Oil is a fragrance ingredient, an essential oil.

Rose Oil is a fragrance ingredient, an essential oil.

Disodium Cocamido-Mea-Sulfosuccinate is a disodium salt of a substituted ethanolamide halfester of sulfosuccinic acid derived from coconut oil. It is used in shampoos and bar soaps.

Cetyl Alcohol is a foam booster, surfactant, emulsion stabiliser.

Tocopheryl Acetate is an anti-oxidant, skin conditioning agent; there is a health concern because it is potentially harmful to the skin.

Most of the ingredients in this product are unnecessary and offer no real benefit to your skin or health. It is marketed as a mild product, yet some of the ingredients are linked to cancer, developmental/reproductive toxicity and allergies.

other soap and cosmetic ingredients

There are ingredients used in other soap and cosmetic products that should be of interest to you as chances are you are currently using products containing them. Just take a look at the ingredients list right now to see if it contains any of the following:

Diethanolamine (DEA), Triethanolamine (TEA) are used as emulsifiers and/or foaming agents. They can cause allergic reactions, eye irritation and dryness of hair and skin. DEA and TEA are ‘amines’ (ammonia compounds) and can form cancer-causing nitrosamines when they come in contact with nitrates. They can be toxic if they are absorbed into the body over a long period of time.

Methyl, Propyl, Butyl and Ethyl Paraben these are popular preservatives. They are used as inhibitors of microbial growth and to extend the shelf life of products. They are known to cause many allergic reactions and skin rashes. Also, studies have shown they can be absorbed by the body through the skin. They are widely used by commercial manufacturers even though they are known to be toxic.

Diazolidinyl Urea, Imidazolidinyl Urea these are widely used preservatives. The American Academy of Dermatology has found them to be a primary cause of contact dermatitis. The trade name for these chemicals is Germall and they must be combined with other preservatives. Both these chemicals release formaldehyde which can be toxic.

Petrolatum also known as petroleum jelly, this mineral oil derivative is used for its emollient properties in cosmetics. It presents no nutritive value to the skin and can interfere with the body's natural moisturising mechanism leading to dryness and chapping of the skin. It tends to create the conditions it claims to alleviate. It is used by manufacturers because it is cheap.

Propylene Glycol this is a synthetic petrochemical mix used as a humectant. It is known to cause allergic reactions, hives and eczema. Be aware that PEG (polyethylene glycol) and PPG (polypropylene glycol) are related synthetics.

synthetic fragrances it is difficult to know what these chemicals are as the labels simply state 'fragrance'. The problems that can be caused by these chemicals include headaches, dizziness, rash, hyper-pigmentation, violent coughing, vomiting and skin irritation. They are not necessary as they do not offer any aroma-therapeutic benefits.

Isethionate is used to create a dense lather and lots of suds.

Sodium dodecylbenzenesulfonate is a type of detergent so strong it is commonly used in laundry detergents.

Pentasodium pentatate is a type of acid which is used as a water softener.

Butylated hydroxytoluene is a preservative

Sodium Laureth Sulfate (SLES) and Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS) are detergents used in over 90 per cent of every shampoo or body wash, car shampoo, garage floor cleaners and engine degreasers. Over-exposure to SLS has been linked to eye damage, depression, difficulty in breathing, diarrhoea and severe skin irritation. SLS is a prime suspect in causing damage to the skin's immune system by causing layers to separate and inflame. Your body may retain the SLS for up to five days, during which time it may enter and maintain residual levels in the heart, liver, the lungs, and the brain. SLES can also be dangerous due to dioxane contamination.

denatured alcohol strips your skin's moisture and natural immune barrier making you more vulnerable to bacteria, moulds and viruses. It is used in many skin and hair products, fragrance, and antibacterial hand washes.

Isopropyl alcohol is a very drying and irritating solvent and dehydrator that strips your skin's moisture and natural immune barrier, making you

more vulnerable to bacteria, moulds and viruses. It is made from propylene, is a petroleum derivative and is found in many skin and hair products, fragrances, antibacterial hand washes as well as shellac and antifreeze. It can act as a 'carrier' accelerating the penetration of other harmful chemicals into your skin.

mineral oil this is a petroleum by-product which coats the skin like plastic. It clogs the pores and interferes with the skin's ability to eliminate toxins promoting acne and other disorders. It slows down skin function and cell development resulting in premature ageing. It is used in many skin care products.

petroleum distillates are found in lipsticks, lip balms, foundations and mascaras. They are potentially contaminated with or break down into chemicals linked to cancer or other significant health problems. They are also known to be a gastro-intestinal, liver, respiratory and blood toxicant.

Phenylphenol is used in body washes. It can potentially disrupt the endocrine system, raising concerns about impaired fertility or development and increased risks for certain cancers. It is a neurotoxin, cardiovascular or blood toxicant, respiratory toxicant, and a skin or sense organ toxicant.

Sodium Chloride is common table salt. It is used to increase the viscosity in detergents and cosmetics and can cause eye and skin irritation if used in high concentrations. It's usually used to make a cheap product with a watery consistency look rich and thick.

Triclosan is a synthetic 'antibacterial' ingredient found in many skin care products. It is a chlorophenol, a type of chemical suspected of causing cancer in humans. Its manufacturing process may produce dioxin, which is a powerful hormone-disrupting chemical. It can affect nerve endings, so contact with it often causes little or no pain. It can lead to cold sweats, circulatory collapse and convulsions. Stored in body fat, it can damage the liver, kidneys and lungs and can cause paralysis, suppression of immune function, brain haemorrhages, and heart problems.

When presented with the information about the ingredients in commercial soap products, it is easy to see that the natural handmade alternative presents a better choice. There is no need for us as consumers to continue putting up with the negative effects of commercial soaps as there is overwhelming evidence to convince us otherwise. It requires vigilance on our part as consumers and needs us to take responsibility for our health. It requires us to seek out products that are not harmful to our health or, better still, to make our own – yes really, no kidding. By crafting them yourself you have control over the ingredients

in the products you are using. Furthermore, making your own is less expensive and you end up with a very high quality product that is made for and by you.

Natural handcrafted soaps are better for you in the long-term. When you use them you will not only discover significant improvements in your skin, you will also have more peace of mind in the knowledge that you and your family are no longer being exposed to the health-damaging effects of commercial detergents.

Handcrafted soaps are naturally moisturising as they retain the glycerin produced naturally from the saponification process. The oils used in handmade soaps are selected for their unique characteristics. The coconut oil produces a rich lather; olive oil is moisturising, palm oil gives a hard bar; castor oil is emollient and adds creaminess to soaps. The glycerin that is retained in the soap is a skin soothing emollient that adds to the goodness of handmade soap, and will not strip your skin of its natural moisture and give you skin problems such as eczema. Handmade soap also kills germs without the use of triclosan.

Making your own natural soaps may at first seem daunting but in fact it is very easy to do with a little help and guidance.