



HINT OF TINT

Years ago, I felt I needed something for my skin, but foundations seemed too heavy, too chalky and too difficult to blend just so. I became hooked on tinted moisturizers. I'm not alone. These lightly pigmented lotions are more popular than ever, owing to advances in dermatologic procedures and products that leave skin healthier looking, with less need to cover up. "Tinted moisturizers are best for women who have basically good skin," explains Laura Mercier, "because they're sheer and they hide subtle imperfections and redness while still letting your real skin shine through." Other benefits: many have substantial SPFs, are easy to apply, leave skin with a dewy finish and can be hydrating enough to be worn alone, without another moisturizer. Our favorites, clockwise from top left: **JOEY NEW YORK** Pure Pores tinted moisturizer, SPF 15 (\$32), 800-563-9691. **PRADA** Hydrating Gel Cream, SPF 15 Tint (\$40), at Neiman Marcus, Barneys New York and select Saks Fifth Avenue. **LABORATOIRE REMÈDE** Translucent UV Coat, SPF 30 (\$38), at select Neiman Marcus stores, or call 888-243-8825. **CALVIN KLEIN** Face Color Wash (\$23), 800-715-4023. **LAURA MERCIER** tinted moisturizer, SPF 20 (\$38), 888-MERCIER. Not shown: **ELIZABETH ARDEN** Sheer Lights Illuminating tinted moisturizer, SPF 15 (\$25), at Macy's and Lord & Taylor. M.M.G.

WHAT'S IN A LABEL?

Concerns about the safety of cosmetics ingredients have spawned public discussion, controversy and misinformation in recent years. To separate fact from fiction, we consulted dermatologists Debra Jaliman, Rhoda Narins, David Orentreich and Patricia Wexler in New York and Roxanne Panicacci in Santa Monica. They emphasize that only a small percentage of the population has skin that reacts to the following ingredients.

DYES Used for: coloring products. Can cause: allergic skin reactions. Strictly speaking: The FDA regulates colors more stringently than any other cosmetics ingredient and bans colors shown to cause cancer in animals or humans.

FRAGRANCE Can cause: allergic reactions (hives, rashes and burning skin). Strictly speaking: Fragrance with photosensitizing ingredients can also cause temporary dark spots on the skin. **IMIDAZOLIDINYL UREA AND DIAZOLIDINYL UREA** Used as: preservatives. Can cause: allergic skin reactions. Strictly speaking: Diazolidinyl urea can release formaldehyde if it reacts with certain other ingredients in a product. But companies are careful to avoid such combinations, since formaldehyde is a common allergen. It's also a suspected carcinogen.

LANOLIN Used for: moisturizing. Can cause: acne by clogging pores; rashes. Strictly speaking: Pure pharmaceutical-grade lanolin is so safe that doctors recommend that nursing mothers use it on their nipples. **PARABENS** Used as: preservatives. Can cause: allergic skin reactions. Strictly speaking: As for the claim that parabens mimic estrogen and disrupt hormone balance, several studies concluded that parabens given to lab animals had less than a thousandth the potency of estrogen.

PETROLATUM Used for: moisturizing and promoting healing. Can cause: acne by clogging pores. Strictly speaking: Because petrolatum, like gasoline, is derived from a nonrenewable resource, most organic and natural beauty lines do not use it. **PHTHALATES** Used as: plasticizers to keep products from cracking; solvents. Can cause: Studies have linked them to birth defects in animals. Strictly speaking: The FDA doesn't consider phthalates dangerous. However, a study by the Centers for Disease Control showed surprising levels of phthalates in human blood and urine, and the FDA is now evaluating the CDC data to determine whether these levels pose a health risk. Consumer-advocacy groups are especially concerned about repeated and long-term exposure to phthalates.

PROPYLENE GLYCOL Used as: a preservative; a vehicle for the absorption of other ingredients. Can cause: allergic skin reactions. Strictly speaking: Yes, your antifreeze includes full-strength propylene glycol, but the concentrations in cosmetics (less than 4 percent) aren't toxic. **SODIUM LAURYL SULFATE** Used for: creating lather and binding water and oil ingredients. Can cause: dry or irritated skin. Strictly speaking: Is SLS carcinogenic? That rumor circulated five years ago and was definitively put to rest.

NINA JUDAR