



All good stuff
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carcinogen-free beauty

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Fearless beauty

After being diagnosed with breast cancer, JESSICA JONES decided to investigate what really went into her beloved beauty products. What she discovered alarmed her – but also led her to unearth a host of brilliant all-natural alternatives

ILLUSTRATIONS BY EMILY ROBERTSON

I confess, I am addicted to cosmetics. Always have been. I buy those glamorous white boxes with their luxe gold lettering in much the same way that a magpie collects shiny bottle tops: I don't know what I'm going to do with it, but I really like the look of it. So when, three years ago, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and I began to hear nasty whispers about lead in my lipstick and toxic chemicals in my cleanser, I emphatically did not want to know. I mean, for heaven's sake, what with my hair falling out and feeling sick all the time, I wasn't going to start fretting about whether or not my moisturiser might kill me. Anyway, now that I was bald, I needed my lippy more than ever.

Months of chemotherapy dragged on. Housebound and bereft of gainful employment, I decided to conduct a forensic investigation into the beauty products in my bathroom. My lashless eyes widened as I discovered that every single one of them contained suspected carcinogens, neurotoxins or hormone disruptors. Many contained a hazardous cocktail of substances.

'But I only use a little bit,' I thought. And then I thought again: body lotion, underarm deodorant, shower gel, shampoo, conditioner, cleanser, toner, moisturiser, serum, nail polish, sunscreen, foundation, concealer, eyeshadow, blusher, lipstick, perfume... even toothpaste! I'd used all

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these and more, all over my body, every day since I was a teenager.

My tumour had positive receptors for the hormones oestrogen and progesterone. So did I really want to be using substances that were possibly hormone-disrupting and carcinogenic if I could easily live without them?

It was then I decided that on top of the chemotherapy, radiotherapy, psychotherapy and green-juice therapy I would introduce a new therapy to my regime – Product Replacement Therapy. I vowed that, as each of my products ran out, I would replace it with a new potion as natural and unsullied as angel's breath. Only, what were

the alternatives? Where would I find them?

And were they actually any good?

Since that day I've scoured the shelves of health-food shops and high-end salons alike. What I christened 'Good Glamour' has become a subject as dear to my heart as it is to my wallet. For safer, cleaner cosmetics can be more costly than their mass-market counterparts – but that's because they contain superior, more expensive ingredients. My travels on the righteous path have, on occasion, brought me close to the steps of the doss-house for the stylishly destitute. But there's no turning back.

When it comes to cosmetics ingredients, I now apply the precautionary principle: is there any

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doubt about the safety of this chemical? Do I really need it? If in doubt, I leave it out.

You, too, may be concerned about what's in your beauty products, but feel overwhelmed at the prospect of digesting all this head-spinning technical information about ingredients, carcinogens, hormone disruptors and the rest. Do not despair. Here are some gorgeous potions to help you kick off a beauty revolution.

Product Replacement Therapy

Body basics

The Environmental Working Group's 'Skin Deep' database has a system of product 'hazard ratings' from zero to 10. What could be simpler than soap, right? But even some baby soaps score as high as six on this scale. *Dr Bronner's 18-in-1 Hemp Pure Castile Soap* (£5.49, lovelula.com)

Soapwalla's Deodorant Cream (£13.80, beingcontent.com) doesn't prevent sweating. Rather it uses a mixture of natural clays, vegetable powders and antibacterial oils to absorb moisture and keep one's armpits acceptably fresh. On sweltering days I carry a packet of aluminium-free *Pitrok Crystal Deodorant Wipes* (£2.50, goodnessdirect.co.uk).

After my radiotherapy I was told that I must protect my chest from sun damage for evermore. But I don't want to dose myself up with hormone disruptors like octinoxate and oxybenzone. *Green People's Sun Lotion* (available as SPF15 & SPF25, £17.95 each, beingcontent.com) contains mineral sunscreens that filter UVA and UVB rays.

Face

I'm a sucker for a luxury cleanser. But when I found out that my favourite one was little more than a ritzy jar of liquid paraffin, I dropped it into the bin without a backward glance. *MV Organic*

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claims to have 18 different uses, both practical and spiritual. I have yet to figure out exactly what these may be, but the magic liquid is silky-soft, comes in a variety of tempting fragrances (including unscented) and scores a hazard rating of one. I use it to wash my body and shave my legs. Simple.

Since I use it all over my body every day, my body lotion was one of the first products I wanted to change. With a passing nod to economy, I use *Biona Organic's Raw Virgin Coconut Oil* (£7.99, goodnessdirect.co.uk). Raw coconut oil has antimicrobial properties and it sinks in nicely, leaving a supple - but not greasy - finish.

Aluminium chlorohydrate, a key ingredient in most deodorants, is a powerful neurotoxin. Unfortunately, there isn't a completely effective alternative. Because it doesn't block pores,

Skincare's Energizing 9-Oil cleanser (£57, beingcontent.com) is more a nourishing facial treatment than just a cleanser. I can't wait to get into my bathroom at night, apply the thick, green oil, swaddle my face in hot muslin then sit on the edge of the tub and inhale its heavenly fumes. Caution: try it once and you'll never go back.

I started using rosehip-seed oil to help my scars heal. Then I learnt that it is also one of the finest antioxidant oils for treating wrinkles and age spots. *Pai Skincare's Rosehip BioRegenerate Fruit and Seed Oil* (£20, beingcontent.com) contains a high concentration of this precious elixir. In the

Top toxics to avoid

morning I mix a few drops with *Pai Skincare's Avocado & Jojoba Day Cream* (£19, lovelula.com). At night I just slather it on my face neat.

The older I get, the less I can be bothered to wear make-up. *Oskia's Get Up & Glow* (£64.50, beingcontent.com) has light-reflecting properties that help to negate a *Night-of-the-Living-Dead* pallor.

Make-up

What with having cancer and my boyfriend breaking up with me as soon as I'd recovered, I cried a good deal more than usual and endured rather a lot of sleepless nights. Thank goodness for friends, antidepressants and *Vapour Organic Beauty's Illusionist Concealer* (£20, beingcontent.com). It doesn't mend a broken heart, but it helps to cover up the evidence.

At first I shied away from mineral foundation, assuming it would be cakey and drying. That is, until I learnt the art of buffing with a kabuki brush (£8.49, lovelula.com) to bring out the skin's natural oils: the more you buff, the silkier the finish. *Inika's Mineral Foundation* (£27.50, amarya.co.uk)

Debate rages about which chemicals are the most harmful. The issue is complicated by the fact that some chemicals react together to release further toxic substances, and new ingredients are being developed all the time.

Here are some common toxics to avoid. Read the labels on your products. If any of these ingredients are listed ask yourself, 'Whose best interests do

the manufacturers have at heart: mine or their own?'

- Parabens (ethyl-, methyl-, propyl-, butyl-)
- Phthalates
- Petrolatum/liquid paraffin/mineral oil/petroleum distillates
- Coal-tar dyes
- SLS (sodium lauryl sulphate) and SLES (sodium laureth sulphate)
- Oxybenzone and octinoxate
- DEA (diethanolamine),

cocamide DEA and lauramide DEA

- TEA (triethanolamine)
- Fragrance/parfum/polycyclic musks
- PEG (polyethylene glycol) compounds
- Anything ending in -siloxane or -methicone
- BHA (butylated hydroxyanisole) and BHT (butylated hydroxytoluene)
- Triclosan

For more information visit ewg.org/skindeep



contains zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, which provide a natural SPF as an added benefit.

The trick to carrying off a bald, chemo-chic look is to wear huge chandelier earrings and lashings of lippy. At the time I was going through it there was only one real contender: *Organic Glam*. Its lipstick (£17.95, theorganicpharmacy.com) is velvety and moisturising with intense colour. Recently, however, *Ilia Beauty* has taken the number-two spot with luscious lipsticks (£20, beingcontent.com) in a range of delightful hues.

Hair

In the past I had to wash my hair every other day to stop my head itching. As my hair grew back after

chemotherapy I tried *John Masters' Organics Evening Primrose Shampoo for Dry Hair* (£16, amarya.co.uk). This non-foaming shampoo seemed weird at first. But since I began using it regularly I no longer suffer from a flaky scalp. Now I only need to wash my hair once a week.

One day, as I attempted to exit Content, an organic skincare boutique in central London, the proprietor impeded my departure by proffering a free sample of *Rahua Haircare Conditioner*. 'Get away from me, you devil,' I screamed. 'Just try some, it's free,' she replied, with the persuasive patter of a seasoned dealer. My advice to you, if you're in a position to invest, is to buy shares in *Rahua*. This is the Rolls-Royce of conditioners, with a price tag to match (£27.50, beingcontent.com). I tried it - just once - and now I'm hooked. ●

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