

A handy list of commonly referred to hair ingredients, which to avoid, which are fine, and which to use with caution for drying out hair, curl disrupting, buildup causing, or allergy inducing.

Learn to read your labels, often when you are struggling with your hair it is a sneaky ingredient. If you don't want to read the label or don't fully understand the ingredients, you can run it through an ingredient checker, my favorite: [IsItCG.com](http://IsItCG.com)

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## Alcohols:

### Bad Alcohols:

Bad alcohols are drying alcohols, and are used to help product dry faster so your style sets quickly...think hair spray. Which means your hair also gets zapped of moisture in this quick dry ingredient on top.

#### (Avoid if Possible)

- Ethanol
- Denatured alcohol
- Isopropyl alcohol
- Propanol
- Propyl alcohol
- SD alcohol
- SD alcohol 40

Note: If you find a drying alcohol at the top of the ingredient list, it will likely dry your hair out if used often. If you see a drying alcohol at the very last of the ingredients, it probably already evaporated before it even reaches the bottle. If an ingredient is used in the manufacturing, the manufacturer must claim its use in the ingredients.

### Good Alcohols:

Good alcohols are derived from fatty acids; they provide moisture and are used as conditioning agents.

- Behenyl alcohol
- Cetyl alcohol
- Cetearyl alcohol
- Lauryl alcohol
- Myristyl alcohol
- Stearyl alcohol

Usually the first word ends in **-yl**.

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## Chelating Ingredients Commonly Used in Shampoo:

(Use Sparingly)

While chelating ingredients are amazing for removing hard water minerals, they are extremely drying always follow with silicone-free deep conditioning.

- Disodium EDTA
- Tetrasodium EDTA
- ethylenediamine tetraacetic acid (EDTA)
- Sodium Citrate / Trisodium Citrate

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## Dyes:

(Use with caution if you have skin sensitivities or allergies, or asthma.)

- FD&C is safe for use in food, drugs, and cosmetics
- D&C is safe for use in drugs and cosmetics.
- If preceded with “ext” this means safe for external use only.
- There will also be a number after the color to denote which chemical color composition it is (this allows for putting a numeral rather than the full chemical name).

**FD&C and D&C color names:**

- FD&C Blue No. 1
- D&C Green No. 5, No. 6, & No. 8 (avoid on white, silver, or yellowing hair)
- D&C Orange No. 4, & No. 5 (avoid on white, silver, or yellowing hair)
- FD&C Red No. 4, No. 17, No. 21, No. 22, No. 27, No. 28, No. 33, & No. 40 (only use if in combination with blue or violet dyes for white, silver, yellowing or blonde hair)
- D&C Violet No. 2
- FD&C Yellow No. 5, No. 6, No. 10, & No. 11 (avoid on white, silver, or yellowing hair)

## Fragrance Free vs Unscented

**Fragrance-free means:** there are no fragrances or masking agents added to the product or any of its ingredients.

**Unscented means:** there may be odor-neutralizing agents or masking agents in individual ingredients but no scent is added to the product.

### Irritants can include:

- FORMALDEHYDE
- FORMALDEHYDE RELEASERS
- PHTHALATES

## Formaldehyde:

In my opinion, should be banned from use in household cleaners, dryer sheets, and cosmetics.

You can read more on formaldehyde in [How Formaldehyde May be Damaging Your Health & Hair Through Your Hair Products](#)

### A Small List of Some Formaldehydes:

- Diazolidinyl urea
- DMDM hydantoin
- Glyoxal
- Imidazolidinyl urea
- Polyoxymethylene urea
- Quaternium-15
- Sodium hydroxymethylglycinate

*(Formaldehyde is in several chemical straightening treatments as well, do your research before you have the smoothing and blow out treatments.)*

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## Gluten:

Gluten is only necessary to avoid if you have a wheat or gluten allergy or Celiac Disease. Otherwise, it is unlikely to cause any issue with your hair.

**My Preference:** I avoid as much as possible because I have a gluten sensitivity.

### Gluten containing grains:

- Barley
  - Brewer's Yeast
  - Durum
  - Rye
  - Semolina
  - Spelt
  - Triticale
  - Wheat
  - Wheatberries
  - Various forms of Malt
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## Glycerin and Humectants:

**All Humectants can be problematic and cause frizz.**

### Glycerin Labeling:

(Not to be avoided unless you have a known issue.)

- Glycerin
- Vegetable Glycerin

### Other humectants in hair products:

(Not to be avoided and most are not as quick to cause issues as glycerin.)

### Biologic Humectants-

- Glycogen
- Hyaluronic acid
- Inositol
- Panthenol
- Sodium PCA

## Diols and triols-

- 1,2,6 hexanetriol
- Butylene glycol
- Capryl glycol
- Dipropylene glycol
- Glycerin
- Hexanediol or -triol beeswax
- Hexylene glycol
- Phytantriol Propylene glycol
- Triethylene glycol

## Hydrolyzed proteins can also act as humectants-

- Elastin
- Collagen
- Keratin
- Silk

## Sugars and modified sugars-

- Erythritol
- Fructose
- Glucose
- Honey
- Polyglyceryl sorbitol
- Sorbitol
- Xylitol

## Ethers-

(The x will be a number depending on its compound name.)

- Isoceteth-x
- Isolaureth-x
- Laneth-x
- Laureth-x
- PEG-x (polyethylene glycol)
- Silicone copolyols
- teareth-x

## ITCHY M's

### (Use with Caution)

The itchy m's are not an ingredient that causes buildup but are two ingredients that cause allergic reactions...mainly itching, thus their nickname. They are preservatives used to combat bacteria, fungi, and yeast in hair products. You will usually find them toward the end of the product list. For most, they pose no issue but if your scalp itches, check for these two culprits.

- Methylchloroisothiazolinone (MCI)
  - Methylisothiazolinone (MI)
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## OILS & BUTTERS

*(Note: Essential oils do not work the same way as vegetable and nut oils or butters.)*

### Some Oils and Butters Commonly Found in Hair Products

(Solid at room temperature use with caution if you hair is fine or thin)

- Babassu oil
- Cocoa Butter
- Coconut oil
- Mango Butter
- Muru Muru Butter
- Shea Butter
- etc.

(Liquid at room temperature)

- Argan Oil
- Grapeseed Oil
- Jojoba Oil
- Marula Oil
- Sweet Almond Oil
- Sunflower Oil
- Safflower Oil
- Squalane Oil
- etc.

If you have silver hair I would recommend avoiding these oils due to potential staining:

- Black Castor Oil
- Hemp Oil
- Olive Oil

*(Note: Mineral oil is not a naturally occurring oil it is a petroleum distillate and acts much like silicones on the hair. One to avoid.)*

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## Parabens:

(Best to avoid if possible especially if you are experiencing [hair loss](#))

- Benzylparaben
- Butylparaben
- Isobutylparaben
- Isopropylparaben
- Methylparaben
- Propylparaben

(Usually ending in –paraben)

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## Polyquats:

**(Use with Caution)**

They do not generally cause buildup alone but if they are combined with other ingredients that cause buildup like heavy oils and butters or silicones they will contribute.

- Polyquaternium-44 (best performer)
- Polyquaternium-7
- Polyquaternium-11
- Polyquaternium-10

(The list of polyquats is very long, the number at the end of a polyquat does not delineate any chemical formulation, only when the chemical was created, they are in order from 1 on...)

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## Proteins:

**(Use According to Your Hair Type)**

Proteins provide strength, they can rebuild the hair shaft (temporarily when it has been damaged by bleach and is in the high porosity category), and some are even film forming providing moisture for the hair.

Any ingredient preceded with “Hydrolyzed” and followed by “Protein” is a protein. Hydrolyzed means it has been molecularly broken down into smaller particles so that is available to the hair cuticle. Other proteins can be listed as amino acids and peptides. Not all proteins are the same size even when they are hydrolyzed, so you have larger proteins (great for high porosity hair and smaller proteins great for low porosity or fine hair.

## Larger Proteins:

- Wheat
- Soy
- Oats

## Smaller Proteins:

- Corn
- Silk
- Keratin

**Collagen** is a mix of amino acids. It is a hydrating protein. It has its own set of small to large proteins derived from it: collagen being the whole molecule, hydrolyzed collagen, gelatin, and collagen amino acids (the smallest).

**Quinoa** is complete protein meaning it contains all 8 of the essential amino acids. Which means it contains these amino acids: histidine, isoleucine, leucine, lysine, methionine, phenylalanine, threonine, tryptophan and valine.

## Amino Acids:

Amino Acids are not a protein on their own; they are individual components and building blocks of a complete protein:

- Alanine
- Arginine
- Aspartic acid
- Cysteine
- Glutamine or Glutamic Acid
- Glycine
- Histidine
- Isoleucine
- Leucine
- Lysine
- Methionine
- Phenylalanine
- Proline
- Serine
- Threonine
- Tryptophan
- Tyrosine
- Valine

Sometimes there will be an **L-** before the amino acid.

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## Silicones that Buildup:

**(Avoid if Possible)**

- Amodimethicone
- Cetearyl Methicone
- Cetyl Dimethicone
- Dimethicone
- Dimethiconol
- Stearyl Dimethicone
- Trimethylsilylamodimethicone

Usually contains the ending **-cone, -xane, -conol**

## Water-Soluble Silicones:

**(Use Mindfully)**

- PEG-8 (or higher) Dimethicone
- Bis-PEG-8 (or higher) Dimethicone
- Bis-PEG-8/PEG-8 Dimethicone
- Bis-PEG-18 methyl ether dimethyl silane
- PEG-8-PG-coco glucoside dimethicone
- Dimethicone PEG-X phosphate

Usually contains the prefix **PEG-**.

Some dimethicones are shampoo soluble, and can be used with care.

Always avoid: Cyclomethicones, they will have the prefix cyclo-. Avoiding them is better for your hair and the environment.

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## Sulfates Commonly Used in Shampoo:

### **(Avoid if Possible)**

- Laureth Sulfate Sodium
- Lauroyl Isethionate
- Lauryl Sulfoacetate Sodium
- Sodium Lauroyl Taurate
- Sodium Lauryl Sulfate

Usually contains the word “**sulfate**”.

### **NOT A SULFATE:**

#### **(Use with Caution)**

- Sodium C14-16 Olefin Sulfonate