



# Occupational Health & Safety for Black Hair Salon Workers

**Black Women for Wellness, Los Angeles**

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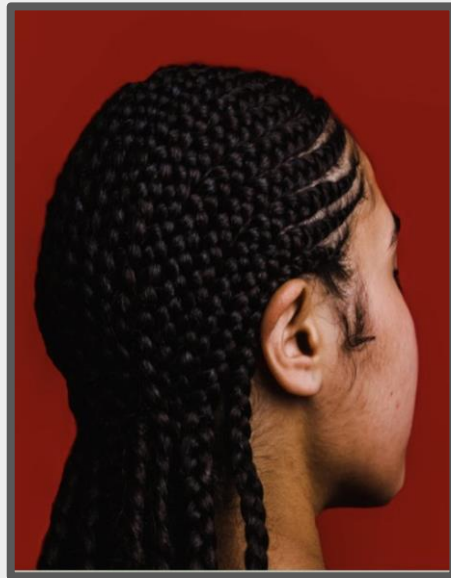
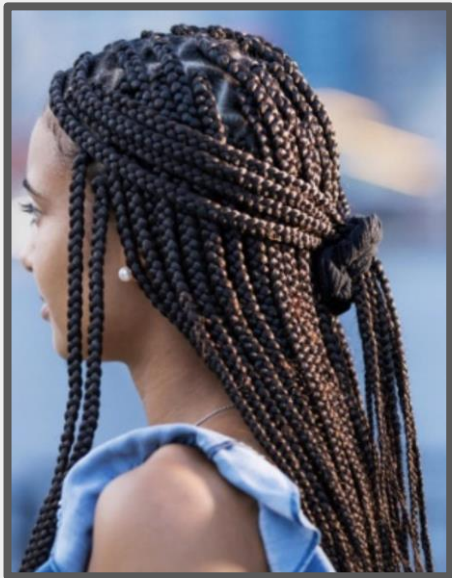
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# Background

- Chemicals of concern present in Black hair care products
- Salon workers and prolonged exposure
- Lack of research surrounding health consequences
- Lack of regulations on toxic products

# Common Black Hair Styles and Services

Natural Services



Chemical Services



# Common Chemicals of Concern


Parabens      Phthalates      Formaldehyde (Releasers)



Endocrine Disruptor    Endocrine Disruptor    Carcinogen



**INGREDIENTS:** WATER, SODIUM LAURYL SULFATE, SODIUM LAURETH SULFATE, COCAMIDOPROPYL BETAINE, GLYCOL DISTEARATE, SODIUM CITRATE, COCAMIDE MEA, SODIUM XYLENESULFONATE, DIMETHICONE, FRAGRANCE, CITRIC ACID, SODIUM BENZOATE, POLYQUATERNIUM-76, SODIUM CHLORIDE, TETRASODIUM EDTA, TRISODIUM ETHYLENEDIAMINE DISUCCINATE, PANTHENOL, PANTHENYL ETHYL ETHER, METHYLCHLOROISOTHIAZOLINONE, METHYLISOTHIAZOLINONE.



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# **Field Work: Salon Workers**



# Objectives

1. Survey Black salon workers in the South LA area
2. Learn about occupational hazards within the industry
3. Identify changes over time
4. Disseminate safety information regarding chemicals of concern



Out Canvassing!

Personal Care Chemicals of Concern		
<b>Makeup</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BHA 1,8,9,11,14</li> <li>Coumarin 5,9,11,13</li> <li>Ethanolamine 9,19,14</li> <li>Formaldehyde 9,10,12</li> <li>Hydroquinone 2,5,6,9,10</li> <li>Parabens (methyl-, propyl-, iso-, butyl-) 5,7,11</li> <li>Phenoxyethanol 1,3,5</li> <li>Phthalates (dibutyl) 1,5,7,9</li> <li>Sodium Laureth Sulfate 6,7,9,10</li> <li>Synthetic fragrances 1,2</li> <li>Talc 1,3,9</li> </ul>	<b>Hair Products</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BHA 1,8,9,11,14</li> <li>Coumarin 5,9,11,13</li> <li>DMDM Hydantoin 9,11,12</li> <li>Ethanolamine 1,9,14</li> <li>Formaldehyde 9,10,12</li> <li>Guanine hydroxide 3,4,5</li> <li>Parabens (methyl-, propyl-, iso-, butyl-) 5,7,11</li> <li>Phenoxyethanol 1,3,5</li> <li>Phthalates (dibutyl) 1,5,7,9</li> <li>P-phenylenediamine 2,7,9,10</li> <li>Placental extracts 8</li> <li>Sodium Laureth Sulfate 6,7,9,10</li> <li>Synthetic fragrances 1,2</li> </ul>	<b>Nail Products</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Camphor 1,2,3,10</li> <li>Ethyl Tosylamide 3,5,9</li> <li>Formaldehyde 9,10,12</li> <li>Formaldehyde Resin 2</li> <li>Methyl methacrylate (MMA) 3,5,9,10</li> <li>Ten-butyl hydroperoxide 2,10</li> <li>Toluene 1,5,6</li> <li>Triphenyl Phosphate (TPHP) 1,2,6</li> <li>Xylene 1,2,10</li> </ul>
<b>Bath/Child Care Products</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parabens (methyl-, propyl-, iso-, butyl-) 5,7,11</li> <li>Phenoxyethanol 1,3,5</li> <li>Phthalates (dibutyl) 1,5,7,9</li> <li>Sodium Laureth Sulfate 6,7,9,10</li> <li>Synthetic fragrances 1,2</li> <li>Talc 1,3,9</li> </ul>	<b>Feminine Hygiene</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parabens (methyl-, propyl-, iso-, butyl-) 5,7,11</li> <li>Phenoxyethanol 1,3,5</li> <li>Phthalates (dibutyl) 1,5,7,9</li> <li>Sodium Laureth Sulfate 6,7,9,10</li> <li>Synthetic fragrances 1,2</li> <li>Talc 1,3,9</li> <li>Toluene 1,5,6</li> </ul>	<b>Skin/Body Care &amp; Perfume</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BHA 1,8,9,11,14</li> <li>DMDM Hydantoin 9,11,12</li> <li>Hydroquinone 2,5,6,9,10</li> <li>Parabens (methyl-, propyl-, iso-, butyl-) 5,7,11</li> <li>Phenoxyethanol 1,3,5</li> <li>Phthalates (dibutyl) 1,5,7,9</li> <li>Placental extracts 8</li> <li>Sodium Laureth Sulfate 6,7,9,10</li> <li>Synthetic fragrances 1,2</li> <li>Talc 1,3,9</li> <li>Toluene 1,5,6</li> </ul>

Organ Toxicity 1 | Skin/Eye Irritation 2 | Irritation 3 | Burns/Lesions 4 | Developmental/Reproductive Harm 5 | Nervous System Toxicity 6 | Hormone Disruption 7 | Hormone Mimicker 8 | Cancer 9 | Respiratory Harm 10 | Immune System Toxicity 11 | Genetic Damage 12 | Cell Damage 13 | Bioaccumulative (builds up in the body) 14

NOTE: Each personal care category includes common chemicals to consider when picking products, but these chemicals may be found across categories as well.

BWW Chem Card

## 5 Top Tips for Safer Styling

Due to poor regulation and nationalized beauty standards, hair stylists are overexposed to toxic chemicals in the professional salon products they work with every day.

### TIP NO. 1 Know your worth and own your awesome work!

You deserve to be able to do your job without worrying that the ingredients in the products you work with might be making you sick! You help make people feel confident and joyous, so you deserve to feel the same way. Know this and own this.

### TIP NO. 2 Invest in yourself by investing in personal protective equipment

You shouldn't have to spend your hard earned money on personal protective equipment, but doing so is an investment in your health. Your salon grade products should be better regulated for chemicals of concern, but better protection in the long run than experiencing a possible health complication. If you are self-employed, ask your tax advisor about PPE and potential tax deductions. If you aren't self-employed, consider asking management if they can provide or subsidize PPE. Check out OSHA and your local Public Health Department for information on what PPE is right for you.

### TIP NO. 3 Switch to products that are better for you and your clients

If you own your salon, by making a list of every product you use, reviewing the ingredients, and reading salon product's safety data sheet, safety data sheets might not feel like your friend, so check ingredients for safety using [safercosmetics.org](http://safercosmetics.org) or Skin Deep. Consider eliminating or replacing the worst offenders. If you don't own your salon or have full control of the products you use, you could provide recommendations to the salon owner for safer and cleaner products.

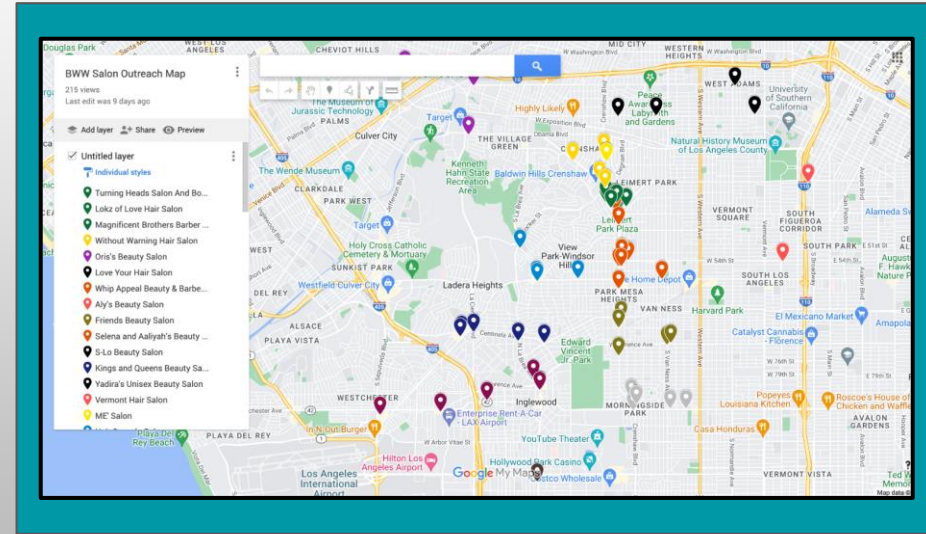
### TIP NO. 5 Stay informed & lean on us

You're the expert in your industry, but we are here to help provide resources to make your job easier. Lean on research from trusted sources like Black Beauty Research, Breast Cancer Prevention Partners, Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, Skin Deep, Cancer and Women's Issues for the Earth. We're here to empower you and to help minimize your risk and exposure to toxic chemicals. Through advocacy, we can get companies to stop product ingredient disclosure and safe green chemistry movements. Share, observe, together, we can bring about the change beauty professionals need and deserve.

BWW Safe Styling Flyer

# Methods

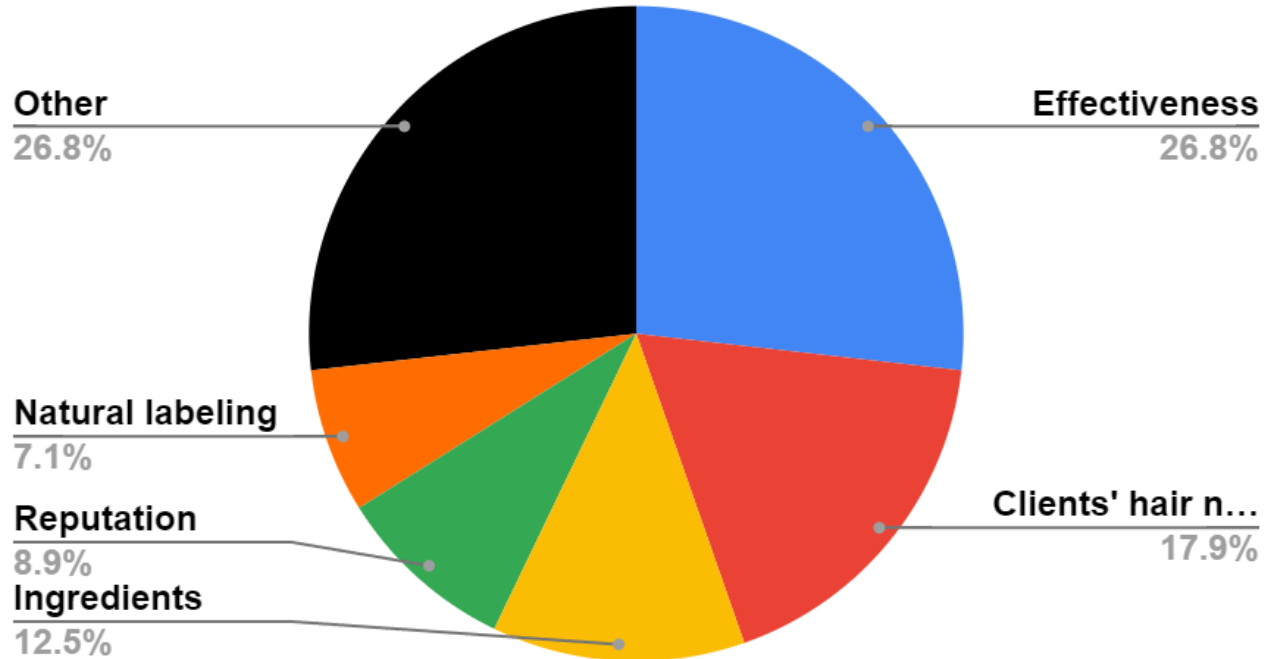
- Develop spreadsheet with over 60 salons in South LA
- Visit 6–9 salons per day
- Survey stylists and input responses into a Google Form
- Consolidate data into a master spreadsheet



Salon Outreach Map

# Results

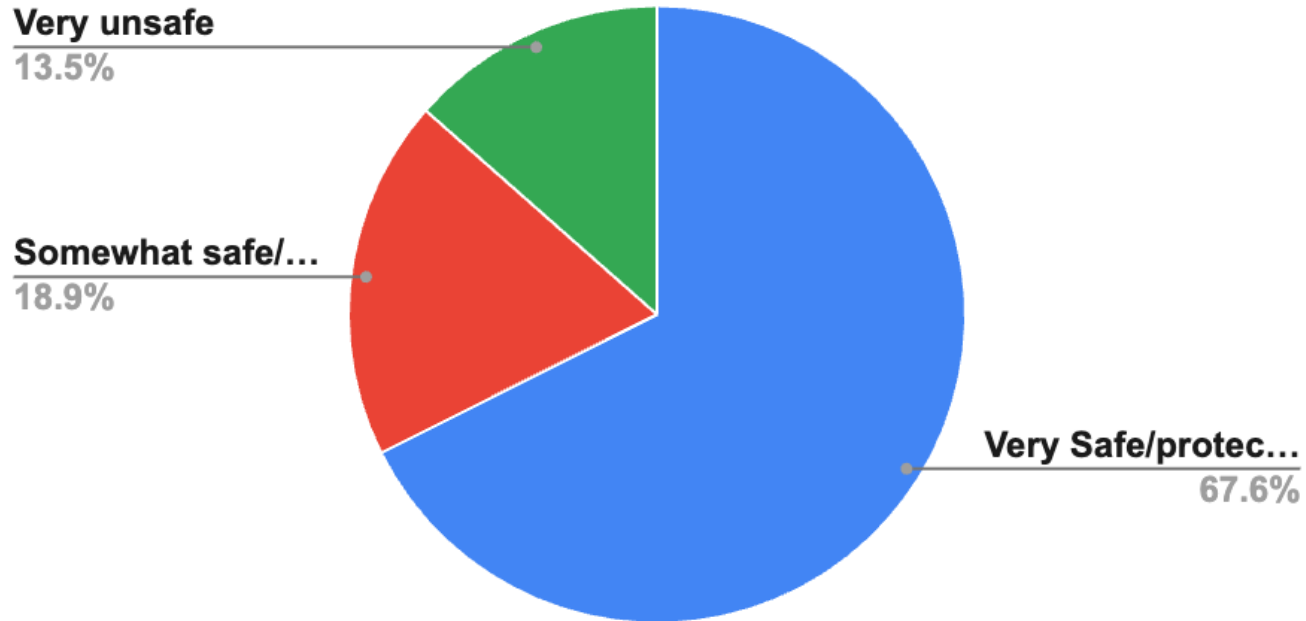
What are the top reasons you choose certain products?





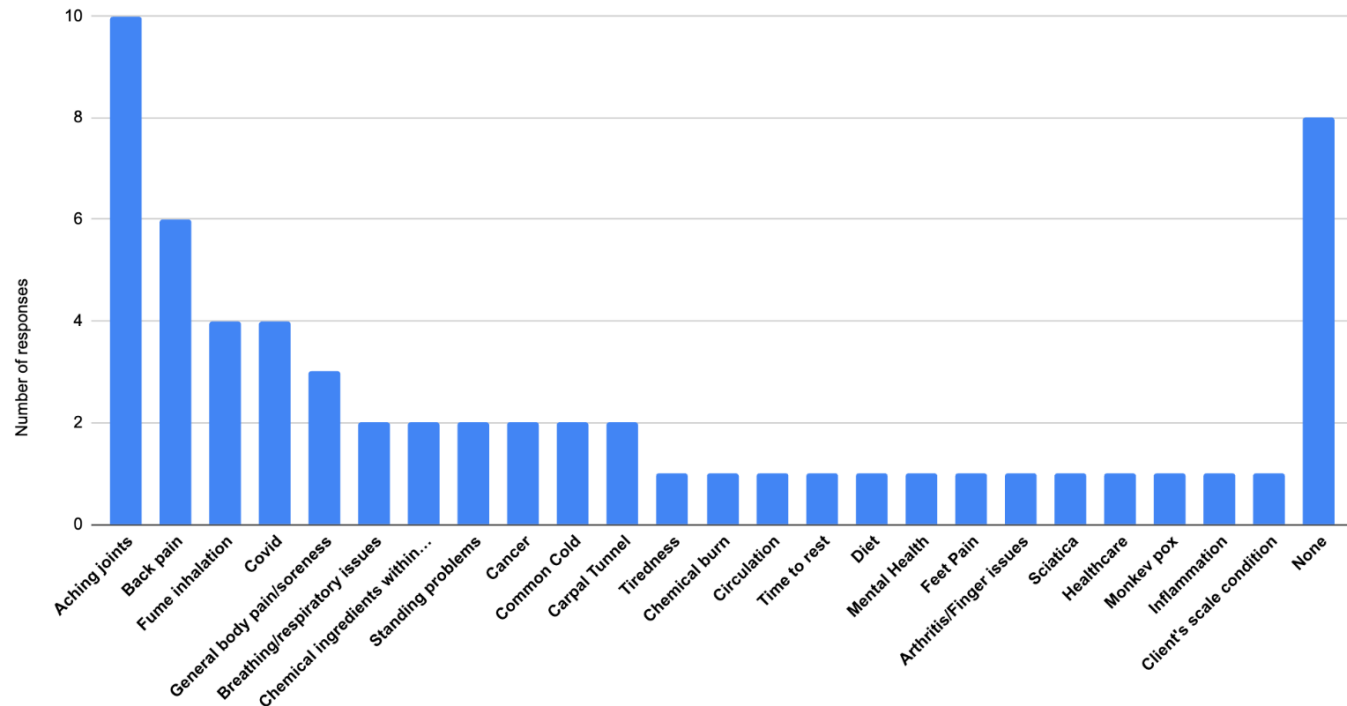
# Results

How safe do you feel around the chemical ingredients used in products you work with?



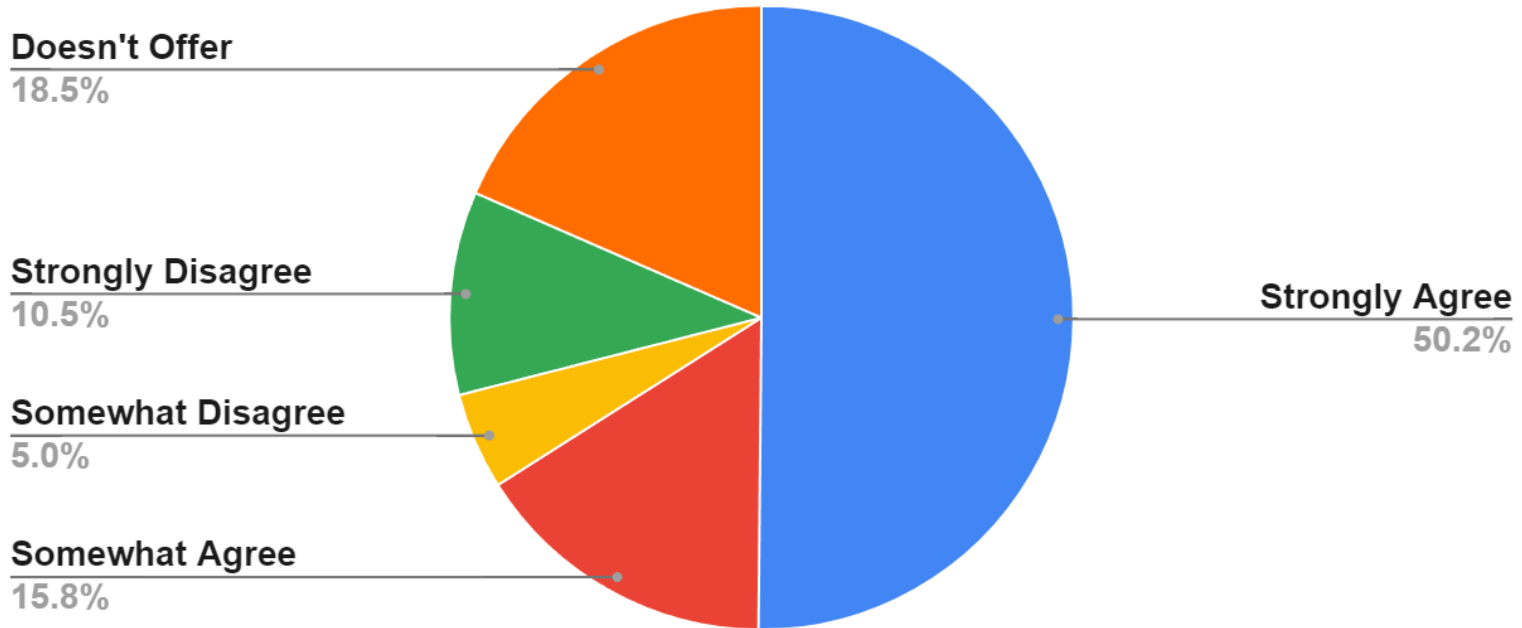
# Results

What are your main health concerns as a hairstylist working in the industry?



# Results

Rate your agreement with the following statement: I have seen a decrease in the amount of chemical hair straighteners and/or relaxers requested by clients?



# Hazards

## Ergonomic

- Standing to long
- Repetitive motions
- Awkward angles



## Chemical:

- Inhaling Chemical Fumes
- Exposure to chemicals from products



## Biological

- COVID-19
- The common cold/flu



**“It’s hard to study every  
chemical that is in the  
product.”**

**- Salon Worker**



# Challenges

- COVID-19 had led to many Salon closures
- Conflicts between posted hours and actual hours
- Returning to a Salon multiple times due to Stylists' busy schedule
- Comfort answering around clients

# Success

- 39 surveys completed
- Outreached to over 80 salons
- New salons found in place of ones that had closed down
- Interview format

# Occupational Safety Tips for Stylists

PROTECT YOUR BODY FROM WEAR & TEAR

## Hands & Wrists

Repetitive hand motions without breaks and frequent wrist bending is common practice in the industry but can lead to excess pressure on the tendons—a gateway to more severe conditions. Likewise, not having proper shears or gripping equipment too tightly can damage the tendons. Keep a straight wrist when cutting, styling hair, braids, cornrows, and blow-drying. Adjust the height of chairs or have clients tilt their heads to ensure wrist health, especially with long braided styles, cornrows, and similar styles

## Back & Neck

Bending forward and twisting squeezes the discs in one's back, which could lead to ruptured discs over time. When cutting hair, shampooing, or generally when the back is twisted or bent, bend at the hips instead of the waist. Likewise, it is crucial not to stand for long periods (can be noticed when one begins to sway or lean backward) as it puts extra pressure on the lower back.

## Foot & Leg

Standing still for long periods can lead to circulation issues within the lower body. One may begin to notice swollen feet or ankles when this occurs. That could lead to varicose veins, calluses, or foot sensitivity. Some solutions to prevent foot and leg problems include:

- Taking breaks between long styles and raising feet during breaks.
- Wearing shoes with good arch support.
- Wearing compression socks to reduce swelling.
- Using a cushioned floor mat

## Investing in a Better You

**Mental Health:** As a stylist, your unique relationships allow people to feel comfortable sharing their personal life or sometimes to unload their emotional burdens. It's okay to offer support here and there, but at the end of the day, you must protect your mental well-being. Prioritize a healthy balance by establishing boundaries and re-orienting conversations when necessary.

## Savoring Wellness

**Diet:** Despite busy schedules, it's essential to make sure you leave time to eat, as simple as may seem. It gives you the energy to power through the day and can prevent overeating later time. Weekend meal prepping or saving leftovers is an excellent way to prepare for lunch. Fixing a specific and consistent time for lunch is a great way to start.

## Recharge & Reset

**Sleeping well:** Similar to eating well, it's important to develop healthy sleeping habits. Good sleep habits include sleeping at a consistent time every night, freeing your surroundings from technology (consider Do not Disturb), and resting for at least 7 hours.

Good sleeping habits not only allow you to feel rejuvenated but help in regulating your mood, enhance focus, and keep away heart disease, obesity, and diabetes, according to the CDC.

Source: California Board of Barbering and Cosmetology "Ergonomics"

# Give Back 1: Safety Card

Front Side



Back Side



## CHEMICAL HAZARDS

### Choosing Safer Products

Unfortunately, cosmetics companies are not always transparent about hazardous chemical ingredients used in their products. For instance, many scented products use the term "fragrance" in their ingredients list. This is an umbrella term that can mean hundreds of different chemicals, including phthalates, which have been linked to breast cancer. However, there are resources out there to help you identify chemicals of concern and choose safer products! Check ingredients for safety on websites like safe cosmetics.org, or see how experts rank the chemical safety of different products on mobile apps like Detox Me or EWG.

### Healthier Styling

As a stylist, you have increased exposure to hazardous chemicals, working with them for several hours a day. Chemical services like relaxers, Brazilian Blowouts, or certain dyes contain harmful chemicals. Prolonged daily exposure to these chemicals can cause skin and eye irritation, and negatively impact your long term health. Avoid booking multiple chemical treatments back-to-back or on the same day at all, if possible.



## RESPIRATORY HEALTH

### Smoke Inhalation

Working with blow dryers, hot combs, flat irons, and more can cause smoke inhalation. Open windows and turn on the A/C when you can, and make sure any shampoos or conditioners are thoroughly rinsed out of clients' hair before applying heat to reduce smoke production.



### COVID-19

COVID-19 is still out there, and has a great impact on workers like you who work in close contact with clients. Keep yourself and your clients safe by staying up-to-date with CDC guidelines and any COVID-19 mandates in your local area.

### Protecting Yourself

PPE is always encouraged when working with clients. Wearing a mask or face covering is an easy way to reduce smoke inhalation and protect yourself from breathing in chemical fumes.



BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS



# Give Back 2: Instagram Post

BLACK WOMEN FOR WELLNESS

HOW SAFE ARE BLACK HAIR CARE PRODUCTS?


# BLACK BEAUTY JUSTICE




True or False?

\*\*\*

Cosmetics often used by Black women are found to be more toxic when tested.





Answer on the next slide →



Answer: TRUE

\*\*\*


Cancer-causing chemicals like formaldehyde are found in hair straightening treatments like relaxers, which are more often used by Black women, who face societal pressures to have straight hair.




True or False?

\*\*\*

Before beauty products enter the market, they are required to be tested for safety.



Answer on the next slide →



Answer: FALSE

Unfortunately, the FDA does not require products, or the ingredients they contain to get tested before heading to the market\*. Likewise, companies are not required to do specific testing to demonstrate product safety.


\*Exception for Color additives




True or False?

\*\*\*

There is nothing we can do to avoid toxic exposures from beauty products on the market.



Answer on the next slide →



Answer: FALSE

We can do many things to protect ourselves from harmful ingredients in beauty products! Some options include:

- checking existing products for harmful components through websites like EWG Skin Deep
- learning about chemicals of concern
- avoiding buying products with toxic ingredients
- limiting services like relaxers, which have been linked to fibroids and cancer.

Under the Environmental Justice tab of our website, we have some resources available to learn more about chemicals of concern in personal care products and ways to be better protected!



# Recommendations

Legislation

Education

Collective Action

Everyday Actions



# Personal Reflections

Natalie

- First field research experience
- Saw effects of COVID first-hand



Thana

- Working towards Environmental justice
- FDA Limitations
- Fieldwork
- Openness of Stylists



# Acknowledgements

BWWLA (Host Organization)



OHIP

UCLA-LOSH

NIOSH

AOEC

