



PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET: parabens

Your patch test shows that you have a contact allergy to : parabens (paraben mix)

Synonym(s): parahydroxybenzoates or parahydroxybenzoic acid esters; industrially used Nipagin™ (methyl paraben), Nipasol™ (propyl paraben); E214 to E219.

Definition: Parabens are esters of parahydroxybenzoic acid and include (from small to large molecular structure): methyl paraben (methyl parahydroxybenzoate; E218/219), ethyl paraben (ethyl parahydroxybenzoate; E214/215), propyl paraben (propyl parahydroxybenzoate; E216/217) and butyl paraben (butyl parahydroxybenzoate). They are used as preservatives.

Use and occurrence:

- in pharmaceutical products for external use (e.g. antiseptics, dermatologically prescribed lotions and creams, nappy and barrier creams, wart treatments, dermatological topicals [paste bandages, corticosteroid creams, Efudix®, Imiquimod/Aldara®, Vaniqa® etc) and internal use (e.g. suppositories, throat lozenges, ear/eye/nose/throat drops and sprays, hemorrhoid creams/ointments, antibiotics in solution, local anesthetics, cytostatics in solution, etc)
- in cosmetic products such as toiletries, toothpastes, mouth washes, hand and face creams, moisturizers, lotions, sun products, cleansing products, soaps, hair care products (e.g. shampoos, conditioners) and make-up (e.g. mascara, lipsticks, depilatories, make-up removers, wet wipes etc.).
- in food products such as marinated, boiled, and baked fish products, mayonnaise, seasoned sauces and salad dressings, fish pasta, mustard, salads, marzipan, water-based ice cream, marmalade, fruit and vegetable juice, cake, candy, cider.
- industrial uses: oils, fats, glues and polishes.
- in products like children's toys (e.g. play gels such as Play d'Oh®).

Remarks:

- The name 'parabens' is used in cosmetics (skin care products), whereas the name 'parahydroxybenzoates' is used in medicaments (pharmaceutical products).
- Despite being hyped in the media, allergic skin reactions from parabens in cosmetic products are extremely rare; allergic sensitization occurs infrequently and generally through the (repeated) application of pharmaceutical products applied on damaged skin (e.g. leg ulcers).
- Although parabens may be present in certain foods, it is unlikely that eating food containing these chemicals will result in allergic skin rashes.

Disclaimer: Always check your products as these lists can never be complete and ingredients change.