FDA Ban on Formaldehyde in Hair Products Delayed ... Again

The ban on hair-straightening products containing carcinogenic formaldehyde is delayed until September but could take longer.

July 30, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

A Food and Drug Administration (FDA) proposal to ban the use of formaldehyde in hair products has been delayed once again, pushing the new implementation date to September, according to NPR .

Last October, the FDA proposed banning hair-straightening and -relaxing products that contain formaldehyde, a a colorless, flammable gas linked to uterine cancer, fertility issues and respiratory problems. The products are especially popular among Black women. In fact, four Black women filed federal lawsuits against L'Oréal and other companies claiming that hair products they sold contained chemicals that caused them to develop uterine cancer and other conditions.

The proposed ban was scheduled to take effect April 2024; however, the first deadline for ban implementation was missed and delayed until July 2024. After missing the updated deadline, the FDA has now changed the target implementation date to September 2024.

An FDA spokesperson told NPR that the proposed rule "continues to be a high priority" but declined to comment on its timing, adding that the process for implementing proposed rules "takes time."

The proposed rule notes that formaldehyde has been linked to sensitization reactions, breathing problems and an increased risk for certain cancers, including myeloid leukemia (which occurs in the blood and bone marrow), and requests a ban on formaldehyde and formaldehyde-releasing chemicals in hair-smoothing or -straightening products.

Allison Stevenson, an attorney representing product manufacturers and retailers, told NPR that delayed proposed bans are not uncommon. In fact, she believes the ban will not be implemented

until 2025.

"The regulation is necessary to protect the health and safety of communities of color, Stevenson told NPR. “I certainly don’t believe that the delay should be indicative to anyone that the FDA is not making this issue a priority.”

More than 150 hair-straightening products currently on the market contain formaldehyde, according to the New York State Department of Health.

The FDA already encourages people to read product labels to ensure they do not include formaldehyde. According to an FDA fact sheet, some hair-straightening products that don’t list formaldehyde as an ingredient may contain formalin, which is formaldehyde dissolved in water, or methylene glycol, which may be converted into formaldehyde when heated.

Although sellers of cosmetics have a legal responsibility to ensure that their products are safe, they are not required to disclose their safety information with the FDA.

To read more, click #Hair Health or #Reproductive Health. There, you’ll find headlines such as “HIV Program Turns Hair Salons Into Educational Hot Spots [VIDEO],” “Taraji P. Henson Launches a Hair Care Line” and “Black Women Weigh Emerging Risks of ‘Creamy Crack’ Hair Straighteners.”

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