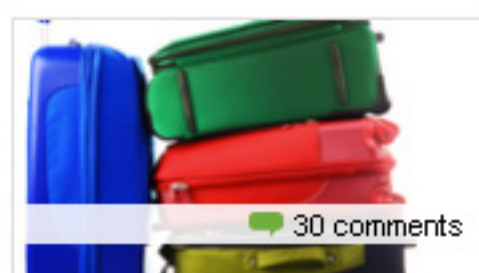


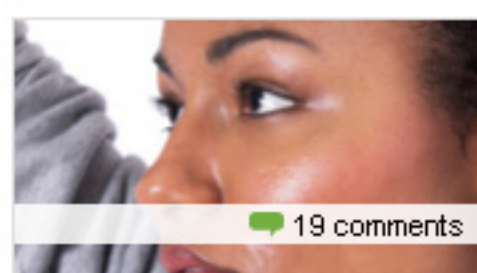
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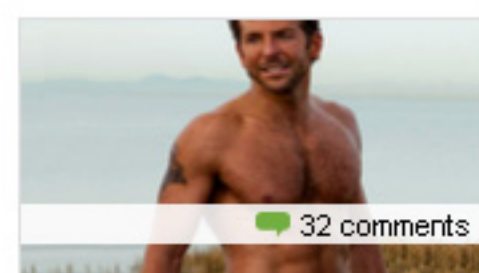
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Sexual Lubricant: 7 Ingredients to Avoid

Care2 Healthy Living Guest Blogger | October 13, 2012 | 4:30 pm | 40 comments

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The sexual lubricants a woman uses can promote her pleasure in a variety of ways. Some serve as gentle enhancers and "indirect aphrodisiacs" by moistening the vaginal and vulvar tissues, mimicking and multiplying the effects of the body's own natural lubrication and allowing her to have sex that feels relatively friction-free. There are lots of lovely lubricants in this group to choose from.

Another class of sexual lubricants can be described as "extrasensual enhancers"—agents that can induce arousal and augment sexual pleasure. They act as aphrodisiacs in a more direct way. They simulate the effects of the body's natural lubrication while at the same time further stimulating pleasure through other means.

Any sexual lubricant a woman uses, however, should be as natural and healthy as possible, because the receptive mucous membranes of the vagina and vulva easily absorb their ingredients into the body. Read the label and examine your lubricant's ingredients as carefully as the foods you eat. Some products presented as "natural and healthy" include synthetic or toxic compounds that could undermine your health.

You might be stunned to learn that many synthetic lubricants contain chemicals first designed for use on automobiles or in oven cleaners! So it's no surprise that some women experience unpleasant reactions when using these products. The following is a short list of ingredients to avoid putting on your sensitive genital tissues:

- **Parabens.** Parabens are synthetic preservatives that can be absorbed through your skin. They can mimic estrogen in your body, and may be linked to increased risk of breast cancer.
- **Petroleum or petroleum-derived ingredients.** Whenever possible, refrain from using products with petroleum-based ingredients, including multipurpose lubricants like Vaseline petroleum jelly, on your genitals. They may contain impurities linked to cancer and other health conditions; they can also coat your skin, impeding its normal functions and not allowing it to "breathe."
- **Silicone oils.** Silicone oils may have toxic side effects, and as with petroleum-based products, they may coat your skin, affecting its normal functions and permeability. Silicone can have many names on product labels, including dimethicone, highly polymerized methyl polysiloxane, methyl polysiloxane, mirasil DM 20, and viscasil 5M.



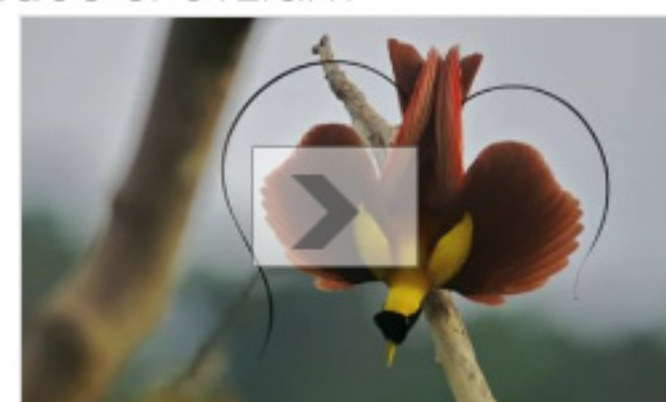
- **Phenoxyethanol.** At high concentrations, phenoxyethanol can be harmful if absorbed through your skin, cause reproductive damage, and according to the FDA, depress the central nervous system in newborns. The breakdown of phenoxyethanol in your body releases phenol, which can adversely affect your immune system. The Environmental Working Group (EWG), a nonprofit research organization, lists phenoxyethanol as a moderate hazard, with possible links to toxicity and skin irritation. Although it's found in very low concentrations in some sexual lubricants, you'd do best to keep away from it—especially when many products without it are available.
- **Glycerin and glucose.** As sugars, glycerin and glucose may feed candida, a yeast that's normally present in small amounts in the healthy vagina, but which can proliferate and cause vaginal yeast infections in women who are prone to them.
- **Propylene glycol.** Propylene glycol may cause burning or tissue irritation in some women. Astroglide, a common over-the-counter lubricant, contains this ingredient.
- **Chlorhexidine.** An ingredient in some multipurpose lubricants, such as K-Y jelly, chlorhexidine can be irritating to some women.

Even if you haven't had problems with synthetic lubricants, using natural products can make a difference in your sex life. Here are some natural ingredients to look for in products or to use by themselves: **aloe vera gel, vitamin E oil, cocoa butter, coconut oil, shea butter**, and even some of the oils in your pantry, including **olive oil** and **almond oil**. Please note, however, that oils are not compatible with latex condoms, so you need to use nonlatex condoms if you're lubing up with any type of butter or oil.

Keep in mind that manufacturers sometimes change ingredients in their products—some lubricants that seem appealing now could later become problematic, or vice versa—so you need to stay vigilant and make sure the products you use remain beneficial. Finally, refrain from using anything if you are allergic to any of its ingredients, or your partner is, or if it causes either of you any discomfort.

Dr. Laurie Steelmith is a licensed naturopathic physician and acupuncturist with a 20-year private practice in Honolulu. A leading spokesperson on natural medicine, she has appeared widely on TV, radio, and in print. She and her husband, Alex Steelsmith, are coauthors of Great Sex, Naturally: Every Woman's Guide to Enhancing Her Sexuality Through the Secrets of Natural Medicine (Hay House, July 2012). Learn more at www.dr.lauriesteelsmith.com.

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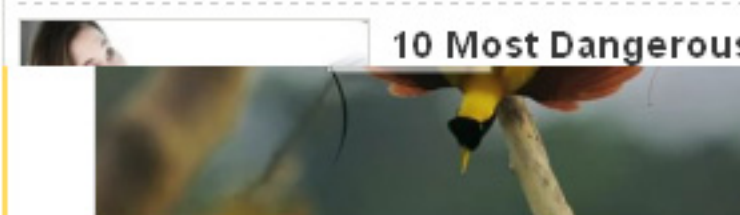
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