

What to do if you have a bad reaction to cosmetics

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(HealthDay)—One consequence of the government's limited role in

regulating cosmetics is that questionable products may stay on store shelves and e-commerce sites despite complaints. Even when consumers report problems, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration can't issue a recall—it can only *recommend* one.

Also, the FDA doesn't require cosmetics companies to tell it about consumer complaints, and people who experience problems may not realize that they should contact the FDA as well as the cosmetics company. This explains how one manufacturer received 21,000 direct complaints about a hair care product, yet the FDA got only a fraction of that number.

To help increase consumer awareness and encourage reporting, the FDA created the Adverse Event Reporting System, a database that the public can access online, with reports going back to 2004.

But a review of this information by Northwestern University researchers found that, even though the number of annual reports has grown over the years, there were just 1,591 in 2016, the year they studied. Researchers suspect that doesn't fully reflect the issues [consumers](#) were experiencing.

What can you do? If you have a reaction or problem with a cosmetic product, first stop using it and contact your doctor to see if you need medical attention. Then, report the problem to the FDA.

Tell the FDA about reactions to a cosmetic such as a rash, burn, [hair loss](#), headache, infection or illness, or any other unexpected reaction, whether or not it required treatment. Also tell the FDA about any problems you notice with a cosmetic itself, such as a bad smell, [color change](#), signs of contamination or foreign material in it.

More information: The FDA has details on how to [report a complaint](#) as well as what details to share.

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