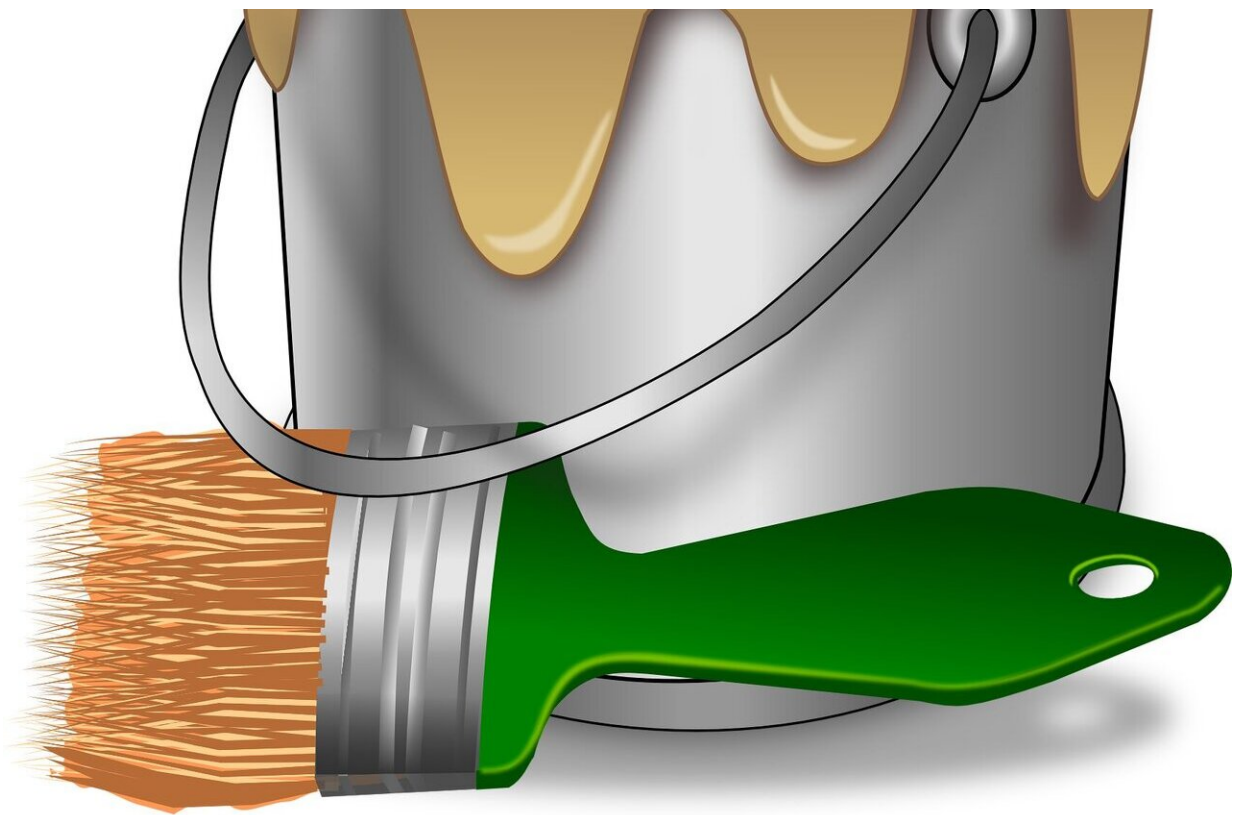


Increasing use of hazardous preservatives—action needed for protection of health and environment

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Use of hazardous preservatives in chemical products has increased dramatically in the years 1995–2018. Several of these are potent skin

sensitizers and may cause lifelong allergy that affects work ability and quality of life. A new study from the Institute of Environmental Medicine (IMM) draws attention to the need for action for protection of human health and the environment.

Numerous [preservatives](#) and other biocides are potent sensitizers at [skin contact](#). Many of them are also hazardous to the environment. The allergy is lifelong and those sensitized must avoid skin exposure to the substance for avoidance of allergic contact dermatitis that may affect the ability to work and quality of life.

Massive increase in use

The purpose of the study was to increase knowledge of how EU chemicals legislations and the use of the most problematic preservatives in chemical products have changed over time, while the use in [cosmetics](#) is better known. The study shows that the use of most problematic substances has increased dramatically. The study also shows that ingredient labeling of skin sensitizing preservatives often is lacking owing to the requirements of legislations. Cosmetics and [detergents](#) are, today, the only products with mandatory ingredient labeling of preservatives. Some preservatives, particularly isothiazolinones, have caused massive outbreaks of contact allergy owing to their widespread use. Therefore, it is often difficult to avoid risky contact and [skin disease](#). Paint, adhesives, and putty are examples of products that often contain these harmful chemicals.

"The massive increase in use of preservatives and other biocides is alarming. Urgent and efficient action is needed for protection of human health and the environment," says Professor em. Carola Lidén at IMM, Karolinska Institutet.

The study, published in *Contact Dermatitis*, includes a review of limit

values for more than 20 common skin sensitizing preservatives and an analysis of data from the Swedish Products Register for these substances in the years 1995–2018. The study does also discuss how EU chemicals legislations can be used more effectively, and how industry could reduce the use of hazardous preservatives.

More information: Carola Lidén et al, Preservatives in non-cosmetic products: Increasing human exposure requires action for protection of health, *Contact Dermatitis* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/COD.14181](https://doi.org/10.1111/COD.14181)

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