

# The Buzz on the bay

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## Saving Face

### Ava Anderson is the next generation of skincare



You probably don't know it, but your cosmetics are unhealthy. Surprisingly unhealthy. Even if your moisturizer works wonders on those crow's feet, or that lipstick perfectly hydrates your lips, they almost definitely contain harmful chemicals that can lead to health problems. Don't believe me? Check out The Cosmetics Database ([www.cosmeticsdatabase.com](http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com)). This website evaluates cosmetic products - each ingredient is ranked from 1-10, with 10 being the highest - according to the harmfulness of each chemical in laboratory studies.

When Barrington's Kim Anderson told me about this website, I didn't want to believe her. I've spent a long time finding my perfect makeup, and nobody, I swore, was going to separate me from my beloved Diorshow Mascara. That was the first product I searched for in the Cosmetics Database. To my dismay, its hazard score is eight. Eight! The methylparabens in the mascara that I've been using every day for five years are a known human toxicant linked to organ system toxicity and, get this, *are banned from cosmetics in Europe*. Even

women in France who don't shave their armpits and smoke unfiltered cigarettes know that my mascara is harmful to my body. Great.

That the chemicals we apply directly to our skin are harmful (and enter the bloodstream without any purification from the liver, like the foods we eat) is a scary thing to discover. Even scarier is that there's no government regulation on what you can put in cosmetics and skincare in America, even on products that call themselves natural and organic. "There's no FDA oversight," says Kim. "As long as you list the ingredients, you can call it whatever you want." While there are 1100 chemicals banned from cosmetics in Europe, there are only nine in the U.S.

When she and her daughter Ava Anderson watched a documentary about unsafe cosmetics - which included a statistic stating that the average woman is exposed to 285 chemicals while getting ready in the morning, and that's before she even leaves the house - they were alarmed. Ava went online to the Cosmetics Database and found that the products she and her mother had been using

had unsettling amounts of harmful chemicals in them. "I spent almost all last school year trying to find products without these chemicals, but I found out that there really are no safer products," Ava says. "I had thrown away unsafe products, but I was unable to provide replacements."

So what do you do when you can't find any makeup or skincare that you feel safe using? Well, if you're concerned enough and you're committed enough to change things, you start your own skincare line. It doesn't matter if you're 15. So that's what Ava did. In December, she launched the first line of Ava Anderson Non Toxic, which is the only skincare in the country in which every ingredient registers as a zero on the Cosmetics Database - meaning there are no harmful chemicals, and they don't even contain mild irritants.

While most teenagers would choose to spend their summer by the pool with friends, Ava spent this past summer working with chemists in New York who were interested in making a zero hazard skincare line, but dubious that it could be done. After months of rejected formulas and insistence from her that every ingredient be completely non-toxic, they found formulas that provide good skincare, and provide it safely. This first launch of Ava Anderson Non-Toxic is a complete skincare line, including cleanser, toner, exfoliator, lip scrub and a moisturizer that works as well as any I've tried (which is a *lot*). In February, Ava will launch a cosmetics line, which will be followed shortly by a men's line, a kids' line and a household products line.

The product is available online and through direct sellers, not at stores. "We can't put Ava's product on a shelf because nobody's going to understand it. We need somebody to tell somebody else," Kim says. "The number one mission of Ava and our family is to get this message out." In the coming months, Ava will testify in front of Congress about the feasibility of creating zero hazard products. Lobbyists for the cosmetics industry have sworn for years that it isn't possible - but one remarkable teenager has managed to do it. Soon, people are going to look much more carefully at what they're putting on their skin, and they're going to make better choices - and they'll have Ava Anderson to thank. [www.avaanderson-nontoxic.com](http://www.avaanderson-nontoxic.com) -**Julie Tremaine**