

Fears over No More Tears

By ACSH Staff — November 3, 2011

The Campaign for Safe Cosmetics (CSC) has been [decrying](#) [1] Johnson & Johnson's baby shampoo as potentially carcinogenic. And, although the company's signature product has been on the market for the past 50 years without apparent incident, the company has finally responded to the CSC's persistent accusations by announcing that they will begin phasing out the ingredients that the activist group claims are harmful to human health.

Johnson and Johnson's capitulation, says ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan, is, unfortunately, just another instance of [manufacturers bowing](#) [2] to the misinformation of an activist scare instead of relying on scientific evidence that supports their initial choices.

In this instance, the chemicals under attack are trace amounts of dioxane and a substance called quaternium-15 that releases formaldehyde. But this is another example of the dose making the poison: In this case, the dose the level of exposure is far too small to be harmful. We have the technology to detect substances at levels lower than one part per trillion, says ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom. The fact is that most chemicals aren't even remotely toxic at these concentrations. But people who don't know this become alarmed. He points out that, while formaldehyde is certainly toxic at high enough levels, the trace amount that is used as a preservative in baby shampoo is negligible and poses no danger to human health. As for dioxane, it's far less toxic than formaldehyde, he says. Lumping the two together shows how scientifically off-base these activists are.

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[1] <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D9QNMUJ00.htm>

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