

Tokyo

FREE

# WEEKENDER

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## HEALTHY IN THE CITY

One Expat's Quest for  
a Lifestyle Change

Fall Movies at a Glance  
Is Water Bad for Your Baby?  
Back-to-School Decorating

# TOKYO ECO:

## Eco-Beauty

by Danielle Rippingale

We slather, lather and spray personal care products on our skin every day without a second thought of what is in these products. Consumers are falsely assured that if they are on the shelf of reputable retailers, these products are screened for health and safety. This is not the case in most parts of the world, including in the US, where 99 percent of products contain ingredients that have not been assessed for safety by the government, the cosmetic industry's safety panel, or any other publicly accountable institution.

There is good reason to be concerned, with 64 percent of topical applications absorbed directly into the bloodstream, bypassing the organs of detoxification—the liver and kidneys. There's increasing scientific evidence that toxic chemical exposure from personal-care products is the reason behind increasing rates of asthma, hormone-related cancers (e.g. breast cancer), infertility, birth defects, and other health issues. Of serious concern is the discovery that the use of these products by pregnant women can have a significant impact on her unborn baby.

Unfortunately, health conscious consumers are unwittingly seduced by images from nature and taglines using the highly misrepresented words 'natural' and 'organic.' To protect yourself you must see beyond persuasive marketing and learn to read personal care labels as you would food labels.

By choosing certified organic products, the ingredients of which come from controlled organic farming, you are caring for the earth, the farmers, and yourself. However, unless the label displays a quality seal from an internationally accredited organic certification organization (such as the USDA), it is unlikely that the product has many, if any, organic ingredients. While Japan's organic certification (JAS) is for food only, Japanese cosmetics that use certified organic ingredients, such as skin care line Amritara ([www.amritara.com](http://www.amritara.com)), can seek organic certification with one of the international organizations.

### What to avoid:

**Paraben:** Methyl, Propyl, Butyl, Ethyl-paraben

**Phthalates (THA-lates):** Dibutyl / Diethyl Phthalate or the word 'fragrances'

**Synthetic Fragrances:** as many as 200 chemicals can be listed under the single word 'fragrance'

**Diethanolamine (DEA), Triethanolamine (TEA) and MEA**

**Petrol-chemicals:** listed, among others, as triethanolamine, diethanolamine, paraffin, behentrimonium chloride, mineral oil, and petrolatum

**Propylene Glycol:** and related synthetics: PEG (polyethylene glycol) and PPG (polypropylene glycol)



Photo courtesy of Juice Beauty

Secondly, scrutinize the listed ingredients on personal care labels, and don't assume that because it is expensive or in a health food store that it is more effective, organic, or synthetic-free.

In a quest for wellness, the discerning and value-driven consumer has higher expectations of companies than ever before. As the name suggests, USDA certified Juice Beauty uses the powerful antioxidants, polyphenols, and vitamins from organic fruit juices to keep your skin healthy and radiant. Available at Isetan Shinjuku ([www.juicebeauty.com](http://www.juicebeauty.com)).

Comvita's unique Huni skin and body care range harnesses the potent and healing properties of NZ UMF@20+ manuka honey, well known for its moisturizing, soothing, and antioxidant properties ([www.comvita.com](http://www.comvita.com)).

With certified organic rosehip oil acting as the key ingredient in most of its skin and hair care products, Trilogy's mantra is "maximum effect on your skin, minimum effect on our environment." Available at the Conran Shop and Isetan Shinjuku ([www.trilogy.com](http://www.trilogy.com)).

Using native New Zealand plant sources, Living Nature's natural product range is carefully formulated right down to their earth friendly packaging. Available at Isetan Mens ([www.livingnature.com](http://www.livingnature.com)).

If the handful (not dozens) of organic ingredients in USDA certified Badger Balm doesn't win you over, then the easily applied, moisturizing and soothing balms in adorable tins will (check out the sleep balm). Available at LOFT ([www.badgerbalm.com](http://www.badgerbalm.com)).

Finally, Pangea Organics offers natural body care products made with organic ingredients ([www.pangeaorganics.jp](http://www.pangeaorganics.jp)).

## Green Glossary

[www.cosmeticsdatabase.com](http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com) - The Environmental Working Group's (EWG) online resource to help you discern the good, bad, and ugly in personal care products. Not without its faults (e.g. data gaps), the user-friendly database provides a wealth of information, tips, and online safety assessments.

## ECO FACT

The average woman uses 12 personal care products a day, containing 168 chemical ingredients, including untested petroleum-derived, animal-tested, and genetically modified ingredients.