

TALCUM POWDER AND CANCER

In one study it was found that 39 out of 40 talcum powders tested contained one percent asbestos fibre... He recommended the use of corn starch, rice starch, flour or white clay instead of talc or asbestos in cosmetics. APP

Talcum powder is produced from talc, a magnesium trisilicate mineral, which in its natural form may contain asbestos, a known human carcinogen. Because of this association with asbestos, all home-use talcum products marketed after about 1973 - baby powders, body powders and facial powders - have been required by law to be asbestos-free. Asbestos can cause lung cancer and mesotheliomas (cancers affecting the lining surfaces of the pleural and peritoneal cavities).

It has been suggested that talcum powder may be carcinogenic to the covering layer of the ovaries through the migration of talcum powder particles (when applied to the genital area, sanitary napkins, diaphragms, or condoms) through the vagina, uterus, and fallopian tubes to the ovary. Several epidemiologic studies have examined the relationship between talcum powder and cancer of the ovary.

TALC AND OVARIAN CANCER RISK

A link between talc and ovarian cancer has been supported by nearly 30 studies over the past 30 years published in scientific journals.

Dr. Bernard L. Harlow and Associates at Harvard Medical School conducted a study where they sought to determine whether the use of talc in genital hygiene increases the risk for epithelial ovarian cancer. " *Their conclusion stated "...a lifetime pattern of perineal talc use may increase the risk for epithelial cancer.."* and " *We discourage the use of talc in the genital hygiene, particularly as a daily habit* " .

An article in *Cancer Magazine* in 1982, "Ovarian cancer and talc: a case-control study", concluded that a lifetime of daily use of talc directly on the genital area or on sanitary napkins increases a woman's risk of contracting ovarian cancer by more than three times.

The Cancer Prevention Coalition is fighting for warning labels on products containing talc and have started a petition drive. They say " *A wide range of scientific studies over the last three decades have clearly linked talc use and ovarian cancer* ".

Both the American Cancer Society as well as the National Cancer Institute caution women that regular talc use has been shown to increase the risk of ovarian cancer. Ref: Cornstarch Powder Cleared Of Talc-Cancer Link By Amy Norton

NEW YORK, April 17, 2000 *Reuters Health*:

Although a number of studies have suggested using talc powders can boost a woman's risk for ovarian cancer, researchers report there is no evidence linking cornstarch-based powders to the disease. After reviewing research on feminine powders, investigators at the American Health Foundation in Valhalla, New York, concluded that cornstarch products present no cancer risk for women. They reported the findings in the March issue of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*.

In recent years, research has shown that women who apply talc to the genital area have a higher risk for ovarian cancer -- a disease that's hard to catch early and kills about 14,000 American women each year.

Many powders, including baby powder, contain high amounts of talc. It's thought that talc particles travel up the fallopian tubes to the ovaries, where they may cause damage. This theory is supported by studies that have turned up a decreased risk for ovarian cancer among talc-using women who'd undergone sterilization by having their fallopian tubes 'tied.' **No studies, however, have uncovered a link between ovarian cancer and cornstarch-based powders. That's because talc and cornstarch are fundamentally different, Whysner said. "Cornstarch" he explained, 'is readily broken down by the body. It's a starch used in food products'.**

Talc, on the other hand, is a mineral that the body cannot easily remove. Further, Whysner said, "talc powders contained asbestos, a mineral known to cause cancer. In the earth, talc and asbestos form under similar conditions; consequently, asbestos deposits can be found in talc". Still Whysner said, "if women are concerned about using talc, cornstarch products are a safe alternative".

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