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Position on Talc and Corn Starch

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FOR: COLGATE PALMOLIVE

BODY POWDERS

WORLDWIDE POSITION ON TALC AND CORN STARCH

BACKGROUND AND OBSERVATIONS

TALC

The results of a number of scientific studies in the early 1970's intimated that talc could be responsible for causing cancer and lung disease. The follow-up work has led to higher standards required for the processing and manufacture of this natural mineral. Talc is magnesium silicate. Its chemical structure is similar to that of asbestos. In fact, talc and asbestos are often found side by side in mineral deposits. In 1971, a report from the Mount Sinai School of Medicine showed that samples of talc from cosmetics contained significant amounts of asbestos. As this talc "crisis" developed, many consumers switched to powders that were talc-free and that contained mainly corn starch. The Federal government and the cosmetic industry quickly examined the safety of talc. The problems were found to be due to the asbestos contamination in talc. Today, all the talc produced has all traces of asbestos removed.

A great deal of circumstantial evidence shows that the perineal use of talc powder by women may be associated with an increased risk of ovarian cancer. This occurrence does not seem to be related to asbestos. A significant number of physicians are advising women to refrain from perineal talc dusting.

There are occasional reports of chronic overuse of talc powder leading to pulmonary fibrosis. There does not appear to be any medical justification for this alleged problem.

The so-called safety problem was an issue principally in the U.S. in the early 1970's. It led to some marketers having both talc-based and corn starch-based body powders available to the consumers. Talc is still the overwhelming choice of users. The only other countries that have shown any negative aspects towards talc are the U.K., Argentina, and Columbia.

Y. Yung (Far)
John Le Mesurier (Far)
S. C. T. (Far)

During the production and manufacture of talc it is important that it be properly treated to kill any microorganisms that may be present during mining. Dry heat, steam, ethylene oxide and gamma irradiation are used. Therefore, there generally is no residual microorganism problem. Nonetheless, some marketers add an anti-bacterial preservative to safeguard against that problem.

STARCH

Natural corn starch is a possible substitute for talc in body powders. Starch is a good absorbant for surface moisture on the skin but it tends to "ball-up" on the skin. Natural corn starch does not have as "velvety" a feel as talc. Furthermore, it is not as free-flowing a powder as talc and, therefore, so-called flow agents (i.e., tricalcium phosphate) must be added to the starch. There are available modified starches which have improved feel properties both in the dry and wet stages. However, these modified starches are significantly more expensive than natural starch and are not used. There isn't a product anywhere in the world being marketed with these modified starches.

There are products being marketed in the U.S. by Johnson & Johnson, Mennen and Lehn & Fink that contain natural corn starch. The first two manufacturers have both talc-based and starch-based body powders being sold for essentially the same price per ounce. Diaparene by Lehn & Fink is "100% talc free" (contains corn starch). One of its package claims is: "pediatricians surveyed preferred corn starch 2:1 over talc".

Corn starch is an excellent nutrient for almost all microorganisms which are indigenous on the human skin. Usually antibacterial preservative is added to corn starch-based body powders.

CONCLUSION:

Talc should be the overwhelming choice as a base for body powder being contemplated for marketing anywhere in the world (i.e., U.S., Europe, So. America and Asia). At the present time there is no overwhelming "crisis" anywhere in the world on the use of talc.

We previously mentioned some minor concerns by consumers and/or physicians in the U.S., U.K., Argentina, and Columbia. In these areas natural corn starch line extension products are available in addition to the talc-based flagship product.