

Asbestos fibers found in body, baby powders

Asbestos fibers have been discovered in nine of 19 body and baby powders, according to a study by researchers at Mt. Sinai hospital in New York City.

The nine samples contained asbestos fibers in quantities ranging from 2% to 20%, according to Arthur M. Langer, head of the physical sciences section of Mt. Sinai's Department of Environmental Medicine.

Asbestos can cause a rare form of chest and abdominal cancer and asbestosis, a scarring of lung tissue. A safe threshold level for a carcinogen like asbestos is not known, according to an expert on occupational disease at Mt. Sinai.

Powders with the greatest concentration of asbestos fibers—ranging from 8% to 20%—were ZBT Baby Powder, Cashmere Bouquet Body Talc, Coty Airspun Face Powder and Rosemary Talc. Bauer & Black Baby Talc, which had a 15% concentration of asbestos fibers, is no longer on the market.

Smaller amounts of asbestos fibers—less than 5%—were found in Faberge Brut Talc, Yardley Invisible Talc, Yardley Black Label Body Powder, Mennen Shave Talc and English Leather After Shave Talc.

Other powders studied that contained no asbestos were Ammen's Medicated Powder; Avon Bird of Paradise Beauty Dust; Diaperene Medicated Body Powder; Johnson's Baby Powders, one made in England and one in the U.S.; Johnson's Medicated Powder; Mennen Bath Talc; Yardley After Shave Powder; and, Yardley Original Body Powder. The Diaperene powder contained no talc because it is made of cornstarch.