

Market Surveillance Study - Summary Report

“Cosmetics for kids still failing to comply with regulations”

Introduction



In recent years, cosmetic products that appeal to children have often failed to satisfy the legal requirements in Europe, particularly products with attractive packaging, sometimes showing images of well-known characters from films or the toy sector. Children and adults perceive these products as toys. They may be part of attractive sets, serve as gifts and bear warning notes that are common for toys. Most of the producers of such cosmetics are toy manufacturers or trading companies.

To provide the surveillance authorities with reliable data on the extent of quality concerns, in 2011 the European Network of Official Cosmetics Control Laboratories (OCCLs) started a Europe-wide market surveillance study on so-called “kids’ cosmetics”. Common care and cleansing products for infants and older children were also included in the study. To date, three campaigns have been conducted covering the periods 2011 to 2013, 2014 to 2016 and 2017 to 2019. This summary report focuses on the results obtained during the third investigation period.

Samples

In the years 2017 to 2019, 905 cosmetic products (corresponding to 1492 individual samples) were collected by the competent authorities in nine countries. About 40% of the products (337 samples) corresponded to the type “kids’ cosmetics” and 60% (568 products) were classified as common care products for children. In total, 41% of kids’ cosmetics had been produced in China, compared to only 1% of the tested care products.

Investigations

Depending on the OCCL, samples were tested for ingredients such as colorants, preservatives, fragrances and sunscreen agents, for impurities including heavy metals and nitrosamines, as well as for microbiological contamination. Compliance with declaration requirements (ingredients, claims, etc.) was also checked.

Results

The overall compliance of kids’ cosmetics was low compared to the common care products: authorities objected to 25% of the collected kid’s cosmetics and to 10% of the care products. Sales bans and recalls were issued for 5% of the kids’ cosmetics but for only 0.7% of the care products. The use of prohibited colorants or preservatives, the presence of the sensitising preservatives methylisothiazolinone and methylchloroisothiazolinone in leave-on products and the presence of toxic impurities like lead or nitrosamines (nitrosodiethanolamine, nitrosodimethylamine) were among the reasons for sales bans.

Decorative cosmetics, including temporary hair colour products (54% of the samples), nail varnishes (39%), body and face paints (25%), eye products (22%), lip products (21%) and perfumes (22%), were frequently rejected. Objections were raised against one third of the products originating from Asia (33%). It is evident that due to the high rate of objections, kids' cosmetics should continue to be closely monitored in the future with follow-up by enforcement authorities.

The activities were co-ordinated by the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare (EDQM). For further information, please contact the national competent authorities responsible for market surveillance of cosmetics placed on the market or the EDQM.