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Opinion on Talc in Cosmetic Products

Talc is the principal component of body powders, face powders and eye powders. It is a naturally occurring mineral. It is used for its physical properties: softness, heat stability and lubricity.

There are two different grades of talc: industrial grade or cosmetic/pharmaceutical/food grade. The latter is extremely pure and meets a number of safety criteria.

In cosmetic, talc particle size is particularly important and varies according to the use (face vs. body powder). Body Talc is used for its exclusive attributes: moisture absorption, lubricity, cooling and as a delivery system for fragrances.

Talc safety has been extensively assessed:

- **Microbiology**: cosmetic talc is sterilized before being used;
- **Mineralogy**: cosmetic talc is >99% pure and the absence of asbestos, or quartz is maintained;
- **Effects on the lungs**: in cosmetics particle size is such that, if inhaled, talc is rejected by the natural cilia of the respiratory system. In over 100 years of talc use, no case of lung damage to miners or talc millers has been reported. For baby usage, toxicology data shows that, if used at each of 5 diaper changes, the quantity of talc exposure is over 6,000 times less than the quantity that would create any minimum reaction;
- **Effects on the ovaries**: In 16 serious epidemiological studies, data show that there are no correlation between talc usage and ovarian cancer.

The US FDA has convened a toxicology task force to study the safety of talc in cosmetics. The conclusions in 1994 and again in December 2000 point to no risk and to the safety of cosmetic grade talc.

There are laws and regulations established by governments to ensure that the companies will only produce and market safe products. The industry associations around the world including in ASEAN are working very hard to promote safety and quality standards among their members and make sure that companies take compliance seriously and work hard to earn and keep the trust of their consumers and their families.

Consumers have to rest assured that Industry and Regulators are working towards ensuring the safety, quality and efficacy of the cosmetic products available to them. In case unsafe products are found in the market, Regulators keep the public informed of their decisions and actions. The ASEAN Cosmetic Committee has issued the ASEAN Consumer Information Handbook on Cosmetic Product. This is available on the ASEAN Secretariat web site as well as the ACA web site (<http://aseancosmetics.org/>). The Handbook answers many of the questions commonly asked by consumers or ingredients or products safety.