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LAWYERS WARN WOMEN OF HAIR DYE CHEMICAL RISKS

A leading lawyers' association is warning women who colour their hair of mounting health concerns arising from a particular ingredient found in many hair dyes.

Research into PPD (para-phenylenediamine) - used in many semi-permanent and permanent hair dyes – has linked the chemical to a number of severe allergic reactions including swelling of the head, burns, dermatitis and breathing difficulties.

“These findings by medical and toxicology experts are well documented yet PPD is used in products bought by millions of women,” said president of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers, David Marshall.

“Although serious adverse reactions to PPD are relatively rare, anyone using dyes containing this chemical should be aware of the risks. Yet how many women have even heard of PPD, let alone know enough to be wary of it?”

Lawyer and APIL member Alan Care has dealt with several claims involving serious reactions to hair dye in recent years, and knows of others. He is particularly wary of the possible effects of PPD and is calling for clear warnings to be shown on the boxes of any products containing the chemical. He would also like to see more prominent advice in the instruction leaflet about the importance of sensitivity tests.

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Mr Care said that one claim settled by a hair dye manufacturer involved an adverse reaction

so severe that doctors suspected a tropical disease and the client was placed in an isolation ward.

Trichologist Carol Walker has been called as an expert witness in respect of four women in the five years up to December 2002 who have suffered from anaphylactic shock. They experienced a violent reaction to PPD in hair dye, causing “horrific swelling” to the head and neck. Since January this year Mrs Walker has become involved in four more cases, bringing her total to eight.

“One lady was in hospital for four days on a ventilator, and it was eight weeks before the swelling subsided,” she said. “Her tongue had swollen and she thought she was going to die of suffocation.”

“Other problems I have come across include hearing and visual problems, red patches on the skin, or itching and tightening of the scalp. One woman found that her whole body reacted when she stood in the shower to rinse off the hair dye.”

Backing APIL’s campaign to raise awareness of the risks associated with PPD, Mrs Walker called for hair dye packaging and manufacturers’ literature to specify very clearly the adverse signs to look for when actually applying the dye to the hair. And she stressed: “It is so important that anyone using hair dye carries out tests for sensitivity every time they use them.”

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Note to editors:

1. The Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) campaigns to prevent needless injuries caused by negligence and for changes in the law to help people who have been injured to gain proper redress through the courts and prevent avoidable injury.
2. Alan Care works with Thomson Snell & Passmore in Tunbridge Wells, Kent.
3. Carol Walker is based at the Birmingham Trichology Centre.

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