

Bird Safety Corner

Personal Items

This month's column will focus on items used on one's person which may affect the health of birds.

Hairspray, Perfume/Cologne, and Deodorant



Yes, I know, you want to smell and look lovely before you go out. Now that fluorocarbons have been eliminated from sprays, the ozone layer is better off. Your birds, however, still need to avoid sprays since they contain volatile organic chemicals (VOC's) which can rapidly kill a bird in the direct line of fire. Just because it's safe to spray deodorant, perfume, and hairspray on yourself (but not breathe it in!), doesn't mean that it's safe to spray these things around your birds. A rule of thumb is not to spray anything (other than water) anywhere near your birds. Perfumes contain essential oils, which we've discussed previously as being toxic. Hairspray contains glue (yes glue!) and solvents. And deodorant, while fairly safe itself, uses a propellant to get from the can to your skin. Even once hairspray and

perfume are sprayed on, it's best not to let your birds near you after that point since these products will continue to off-gas for hours (if you can smell it, it can affect your birds). Spray on deodorant is ok once you're done spraying. So say goodbye to your birds, and then spray on what you need elsewhere before you leave the house.

Nail Polish Remover

Now that you've come home from your big night out and want to remove your nail polish, do it away from your birds. Nail polish remover usually contains acetone, yet another VOC. Non-acetone nail polish removers contain ethyl acetate, another solvent which is less harsh on nails, but just as toxic to birds.

Health Products

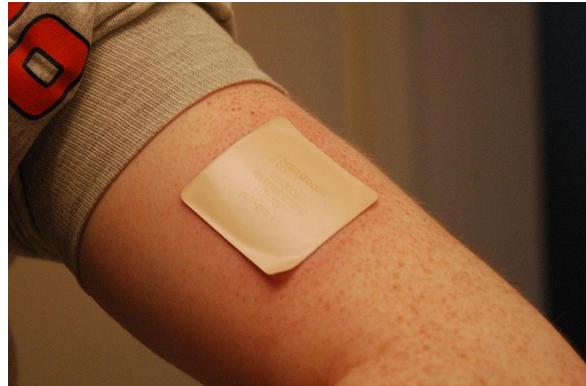
We humans like to put all kinds of creams and ointments on our skin for health and beauty purposes. As a rule of thumb, don't let your birds walk on, lick, or chew any skin with creams or ointments on it, even those which seem benign, like **moisturizing creams**. It would never occur to you to lick these creams yourself, but if your bird nibbles on you, it will be doing exactly that! Obviously there is a wide range of ingredients in these products, and it's safer just to avoid using them around your birds rather





than trying to figure out if something is safe or not. In particular, you should avoid any medicinal creams which contain **camphor** (such as Bengay and other liniments), **menthol** (liniments), **methyl salicylate** (which is similar to aspirin and is in many products, including liniments and Listerine), **nonsteroidals** (such as Voltaren cream), and **steroids**, among others. These are all absorbed through the skin and are highly toxic to birds. Also make sure that birds do not contact skin

which has had medicinal patches on it recently, such as **Lidoderm patches**, **hormone patches**, **nicotine patches**, and **narcotic patches**, among others. Even once they are washed off, there may be residue which can still be absorbed through bird feet or mouths.



As many dermatologists say, the best thing to put on your skin is nothing!

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