

## What is clean beauty?

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Curious about the differences between clean and green when it comes to beauty products? Not sure what ingredients to avoid? Us too. To tease out the nuances in this space, we asked leaders at three clean beauty brands to share their perspectives and insights. The bottom line: There's no one-size-fits-all answer, but there's a collective effort to be kinder to our skin, and the environment.

### **Who: Gregg Renfrew, founder and executive Chair, Beautycounter**

In 2011, Gregg Renfrew founded Beautycounter after realizing that many chemicals used in personal care products in the United States had actually been banned or restricted in the European Union. She set out to create effective, clean beauty products that would also be safe for human health. Since then, the Certified B-Corp brand has been an advocate for ingredient safety and transparency in the United States and Canada, created a [Blueprint for Clean](#) set of safety standards, and committed to using only recycled, recyclable, refillable, reused, or compostable packaging by 2025.



HANDOUT

#### **HOW DO YOU DEFINE CLEAN SKINCARE?**

For us, taking chemicals of concern out is the first step, and our holistic and comprehensive approach to clean looks at a variety of different factors to try to bring the highest performing and safest products into the market that take care of the health of people, but also take care of the health of the Earth.

#### **WHAT INGREDIENTS WOULD YOU NEVER USE?**

We have almost 1,800 ingredients that we've banned or restricted on our Never List, including formaldehyde, coal tar, parabens, classes of phthalates, PEGs [polyethylene glycol] and EDTA [ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid]. We offer a consumer-friendly version that offers a quick reference for ingredients of concern to help guide consumer decision-making when purchasing cleaner personal care products. We have shared this list of about 17 ingredients openly since we launched in March of 2013, which I think has helped inspire a lot of the "never" and "restricted" lists for many companies.

#### **IS THERE AN INGREDIENT THAT CONSUMERS WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT?**

Preservatives are there to kill bacteria and mold, which you don't want on your skin. We've done a lot of testing on phenoxyethanol and have felt comfortable with it. You can say that preservatives are toxic, but you can also say that putting mold and bacteria in your skin is not good for you. A lot of people have gotten excited about things that are preservative-free. But the reality is, unless it has a very short shelf life and has to be refrigerated, it's not preservative-free.

#### **DO YOU BELIEVE GREEN SKINCARE AND CLEAN SKINCARE ARE THE SAME?**

I think they're different. When I started Beautycounter, the entire industry was talking about green, which is why we sort of switched it to be clean. I think [with clean skincare], the brands are trying to drive performance and safety simultaneously. They are not necessarily using all-natural ingredients. And there are some very harmful natural ingredients, like heavy metals. There are some completely benign synthetic ingredients that can be used to drive performance that are fine for human health and health of the Earth. I think clean tends to be a combination of [both]. The green ones are really focused more specifically on the environment and being all-natural.

#### **WHAT ONE THING ABOUT CONVENTIONAL SKINCARE DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE PUT ON BLAST?**

First of all, age defying, anti-aging, aging gracefully lines are often built with retinol ... and retinol is a chemical of concern to us. We've been able to use Retinatural Complex [made with bakuchiol and Swiss Alpine rose] and so I think that retinol is not the end all, be all and that there are other sources of ingredients that can give you the same effect.

The other thing is that ... many of the most offensive ingredients are found in fragrance, and because of international intellectual property (IP) law, you don't have to disclose the ingredients that go into your fragrances, and so people hide a lot of the nasties in fragrance. I always say to consumers, "If there's one thing you can do, it's shop fragrance-free."