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By [Antonia Blyth](#), Contributor

# Surprisingly Dangerous Beauty Practices

## Scary Beauty Treatments and Their Safer Alternatives



Don't be afraid, there are safer alternatives to some dangerous treatments.(photo: Cindy Ord/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images)

A lot of companies are boasting that they have formaldehyde-free products but when you apply heat with a flatiron, you're still getting dangerous

# fumes.

— Jenn MacDonald, hairstylist and owner of Nest Salon, West Hollywood.

You may have heard the expression "beauty is pain," but what if it means skin cancer or nerve damage? And while the French may say, "one must suffer to be beautiful," surely there's a line that you should never cross in the pursuit of looking fabulous.

## Brazilian Blowout



Straight hair doesn't have to come at a high cost. (photo: Getty Images)

If you've got frizzy, unruly hair, you've likely tried a myriad of smoothing serums and leave-in conditioners. You also probably wrestle with a blow-dryer and regularly fry your hair with a flatiron. However, with all this work, a treatment like the Brazilian Blowout that promises smooth hair for months at a time, might seem like a miracle. But at what price?

In the original Brazilian Blowout process, a solution containing formaldehyde was painted onto the hair, which was then dried and flatironed at a high temperature. The result was smoother, straighter hair for two to three months.

However, reports about the dangers of formaldehyde -- an active ingredient in the process -- soon made headlines. Used as a body preservative by undertakers, formaldehyde is a toxic

chemical. Inhaling its fumes can cause lung damage -- and long-term exposure can increase the risk of cancer.

After warnings from the FDA concerning the banning of formaldehyde-heavy formulas, most salons switched to products with low or zero formaldehyde content. These zero formulas are often branded as a "keratin blowout."

Yet, Jenn MacDonald, celebrity hair stylist and owner of Nest Salon in West Hollywood warns, "A lot of companies are boasting that they have formaldehyde-free products, but when you apply heat with a flatiron, you're still getting dangerous fumes."

So, even if you've checked that your salon isn't using a formaldehyde formula, it's vital to ensure that you're not inhaling noxious gasses.

MacDonald uses a formaldehyde-free formula for her keratin blowouts, but says that she is extra cautious about fumes too, using both a fume extractor and performing the process in a well-ventilated space. She says she hasn't experienced any problems or fumes in the salon.

In addition, she offers a treatment she calls the "vegan blowout," an entirely natural product created by Zerran. "I knew that some people were concerned about the harsh chemicals in some of the smoothing treatments," she said in an interview. "I wanted a treatment that was free from chemicals and safe for use on my pregnant or nursing clients."

The results have been impressive. "The vegan blowout reduces 70 to 100 percent of frizz," said MacDonald, "while the keratin treatment reduces 100 percent of frizz --- just like the scary old Brazilian blowout did. "

If these treatments, which can cost \$350 and up, don't work for your budget, there's always the option of going au naturel and embracing your natural curl. You can reduce frizz by using generous amounts of a good-quality, leave-in conditioner, then if you must blow-dry, use a diffuser attachment -- and scrunch or encourage the curl with your fingers as you dry. No brush required.

## Salon Stroke Risk?

It sounds unbelievable but there is actually something called salon stroke syndrome. Although extremely rare, leaning back at a salon shampoo station has been linked to strokes in isolated incidents.

In 1997, the medical journal "The Lancet" published an article that discusses the case of a 42-year-old