



## Fact sheet on preservatives – NATRUE’s position

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*“Preservation is essential for the safety of all cosmetics because it reduces the risk of growth of microorganisms and it prevents harm to consumers.”*

Dr. Mark Smith – NATRUE’s Director General

### Why are cosmetic products preserved?

All cosmetic products, irrespective of whether they are natural cosmetics or not, that are placed on the EU market must be safe for human health by law<sup>1</sup>. All products must demonstrate this safety in terms of their microbiological stability<sup>1,2</sup>. Therefore, microorganisms (bacteria, fungi or yeasts) entering the cosmetic product and proliferating must be prevented.

Microorganisms are not only harmful for the consumer, but they can also affect the product changing its consistency, its colour or even producing an unpleasant smell. Preservation prolongs the shelf-life of the product and the use phase once it is opened by the consumer.

### How are cosmetic products preserved?

Preservation of a cosmetic product can be achieved in various ways:

#### By adding a preservative(s)<sup>3</sup>:

- ‘Preservatives’ means “*substances which are exclusively or mainly intended to inhibit the development of microorganisms in the cosmetic product*”<sup>1</sup>;
- In the EU there is a list of permitted preservatives (Annex V, EU Regulation on Cosmetic Products<sup>1</sup>);
- NATRUE permits a selected number of these EU-listed preservatives, which occur naturally or may be manufactured from natural origin, and classifies them according to the requirements of the NATRUE criteria<sup>4</sup>. The list of NATRUE permitted preservatives (nature-identical or derived natural ingredients<sup>5</sup>) for use in certified products can be found in Annex 4 of the criteria<sup>4</sup> by INCI-name (**I**nternational **N**omenclature of **C**osmetic **I**ngredients).

#### By the packaging of the product:

- Single-use products;
- Products that are closed systems and do not permit re-exposure of the product to the environment (e.g. an airless dispenser).

#### By the properties of the formulation itself:

- Through a well-balanced formulation, some ingredients also have an impact on the preservation of the complex cosmetic mixture;
- The pH value of the formulation (acidity or alkalinity - e.g. an alkaline, traditional bar soap);
- Formulations that do not contain water (e.g. [body] oils);
- Formulations with a high content of alcohol (e.g. fine fragrances).

### References

1. Regulation (EC) No. 1223/2009  
(<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32009R1223>)
2. Commission Implementing Decision 2013/674/EU  
(<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013D0674>)
3. DG GROWTH: Cosmetics – Preservatives  
([https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/cosmetics/products/preservatives\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/cosmetics/products/preservatives_en))
4. NATRUE Criteria and Annexes  
(<https://www.natrue.org/our-standard/natrue-criteria-2/>)
5. NATRUE Standard and Label Criteria - 6 Guiding Principles  
(<https://www.natrue.org/why-us/what-makes-the-natrue-label-unique/>)