

Don't believe everything you read on skin-care product labels

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(HealthDay)— Some terms on skin-care product labels may mislead

consumers, so people can't always rely on what they read on the package, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

"The language on the label is not always an accurate description of the product inside the bottle or its potential effects on your [skin](#)," Dr. Rajani Katta said in an academy news release. Katta is a clinical assistant professor of medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

"Manufacturers may use certain language for marketing purposes, and the same terms may mean different things on different [products](#)—and that makes it difficult to determine what they mean for our skin," Katta explained.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not regulate descriptions on skin-care product labels. That means terms such as "for [sensitive skin](#)" or "hypoallergenic" are no guarantee that a product will not irritate or cause an allergic reaction, she added.

Products described as "all-natural" aren't necessarily good either. "Remember, [poison ivy](#) is 'all-natural.' And even if a [natural ingredient](#) is good for your skin, some products may combine that ingredient with additives or preservatives that could be harmful," Katta warned.

In addition, products described as "fragrance-free" may legally contain fragrance chemicals—as long as they are being used for a purpose other than scent. The term "unscented" also doesn't indicate that a product is fragrance-free. It can describe products that use fragrance chemicals to mask other strong smells, Katta explained.

"Unfortunately, there isn't any labeling language that guarantees a product is hypoallergenic and suitable for sensitive skin," she said.

Complicating matters, reactions to skin-care products may not be

noticeable right away, Katta noted. Some people develop an allergy even after using a product for months or years.

To help prevent skin reactions, Katta offered these tips:

- Before using a new product, test a small amount on your forearm for a week to see if it triggers a reaction.
- Read and follow all product directions.
- Avoid new products while your skin is irritated or inflamed.

More information: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has more about [personal-product labels](#).

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