



Phenoxyethanol

1. What is phenoxyethanol?

2-Phenoxyethanol is an organic compound: a phenol ether combined with ethylene glycol. Phenoxyethanol occurs as a natural substance in some plants, such as green tea and chicory.

2. What is it used for?

Phenoxyethanol is used to ward off bacteria, fungi and viruses. It is a preservative.

It is used before diagnostic procedures such as operations; in wounds, both to prevent infections and to prevent infected wounds from getting worse; and as an antiseptic additive in pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.

3. Why are preservatives necessary?

It is important for cosmetic products to be microbiologically stable; that is, even after opening, the contents of the product must remain resistant to microorganisms such as bacteria or yeasts, which can find their way in through the air or via fingers. Water, which is present in most cosmetic products, is a fertile breeding ground for such microorganisms. This means that most products require a preservative.

4. Why do the guidelines of natural cosmetic seals such as BDIH or COSMOS not cover phenoxyethanol?

Because it is a nature-identical product that, based on the way it is obtained, does not occur naturally in nature.

5. Why does Börlind not share this view?

When it comes to product compatibility, considering benefits for users is more important than abiding strictly by the dogmatic concepts that we often see in natural cosmetics.

In addition, phenoxyethanol was compliant with some natural cosmetic standards prior to the standardization of the European COSMOS label for natural cosmetics.

6. Which seals do Börlind products have?

Börlind GmbH opted for certification by CSE (Certified Sustainable Economics). These guidelines go well beyond the usual criteria for natural cosmetic certification because they include the review and verification of not just the products, but the entire company and its

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underlying socio-ecological philosophy as well. Manufacturing companies that wish to be certified in line with the CSE standard must manufacture at least 75% of the volume of their products in line with an existing product standard in their industry (NaTrue, COSMOS, BDIH, Ecocert, Soil Association, Cosmébio, ICADA, demeter, naturland, Vivanness 2011, ordinance on natural cosmetics in accordance with the Austrian Food Code, NCS).

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7. What does the EU Regulation on Cosmetic Products say about phenoxyethanol?

In accordance with EU law concerning cosmetic products, phenoxyethanol may be used up to a concentration of 1% in cosmetics. In this concentration, it is considered a harmless substance.

8. How do I know whether a preservative is harmful?

Around fifty substances are currently approved in the EU as preservatives for cosmetic products. These substances are subjected to extensive testing to demonstrate their safety. The results of these studies are evaluated by an independent scientific committee. Only substances that have been judged to be safe by the experts will be approved as preservatives in cosmetics. The safety of the preservatives is regularly rechecked by experts as knowledge develops.

9. What criticisms have been made of phenoxyethanol?

A risk assessment of the French pharmaceutical authorities ANSM criticized the product in 2012. In this assessment, it was recommended that phenoxyethanol be forbidden in products intended for the diaper region of children under the age of three or be limited to a maximum proportion of 0.4%. This was not based on a suspected carcinogenic effect, but rather on other possible toxicity. The European Commission's Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety (SCCS) has found the preservative to be safe in a concentration of up to 1%, including for infants.

By way of comparison, in over-the-counter disinfectants from the pharmacy, phenoxyethanol is present in a 2% concentration.

In addition, phenoxyethanol – which itself is well tolerated by the skin – has acquired a reputation of causing allergic reactions, because it has often been used in a combined form in cosmetics: MDBGN/PE. In combination with this other preservative, it qualifies as a contact allergen. MDBGN/PE is a very common allergen and is therefore of course never used at Börlind.



10. In what amounts does Börlind GmbH use phenoxyethanol?

Depending on the formulation and combination with other preservatives, the average volume is 0.5%.

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11. How many Börlind products contain phenoxyethanol?

Phenoxyethanol is used in approximately 30% of the products.

12. Are there plans to reduce the use of phenoxyethanol?

Where allowed by product requirements, other preservatives will be used. Other products will also continue to be developed that, thanks to the way they are packaged, can be used entirely without preservatives.

There are no plans for it to be replaced in existing, tried-and-tested formulations, as this would also have an impact on the consistency, tolerability, safety and smell of the product.

13. When is phenoxyethanol used?

The choice of preservative is always dependent upon the formulation/product formula and the packaging used.

Thanks to its good tolerability, the combination of phenoxyethanol and benzyl alcohol has been successfully tried and tested in emulsion products (cremes), particularly those in jars. In addition, it is more effective over a wider pH range in comparison to other preservative systems, and effectively protects the cosmetic against contamination even when touched by a finger several times per day.

14. What preservatives do other manufacturers of natural cosmetics use?

This depends on the formula and the packaging used. Since these factors influence the preservatives used, many manufacturers of natural cosmetics no longer – or very rarely – package products in jars. In addition, natural substances with an antimicrobial effect, such as alcohol, essential oils or certain herbal substances, can be used as an alternative preservative to the ones listed.

15. What is the advantage of phenoxyethanol?

Phenoxyethanol is a tried-and-tested preservative, which is well-tolerated by the skin and has a low allergy risk. It can be used over a wide pH range. This means that other preservatives can lose their effectiveness if the product is not within the right pH range. It does not smell unpleasant or change the color of the product, which can be the case when using natural antimicrobial substances.



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