crunchy mama collective

THE CLEAN LABEL CHEAT SHEET

What to put back on the shelf.

32 ingredients we keep out of everything we feature, why, and the seals worth trusting. Screenshot it, print it, take it shopping.

THE 30-SECOND LABEL CHECK

1
Flip it over
Ignore the front. "Natural" and "clean" are not regulated claims.

2
Read the first five
Ingredients are listed by amount. The first five are most of the product.

3
Hunt the catch-alls
"Fragrance", "parfum" and "natural flavors" can hide dozens of ingredients.

4
Swap, don't panic
One flag means compare, not throw out the pantry.

IN THE PANTRY

Food & drinks

Put it back if you see any of these on the ingredient list.

- **Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6, Blue 1**
  Petroleum-based dyes that add color only. Linked to hyperactivity in sensitive children; the EU requires a warning label.
- **Red No. 3 (erythrosine)**
  Caused thyroid tumors in animals. The FDA revoked it for food in 2025.
- **Partially hydrogenated oil**
  Source of artificial trans fats, which raise LDL cholesterol.
- **High-fructose corn syrup**
  Highly refined sweetener tied to excess added sugar and blood-sugar spikes.
- **Potassium bromate, bromated flour**
  Possible human carcinogen. Banned in the EU, Canada and California.
- **Azodicarbonamide**
  Dough conditioner banned in the EU.
- **BHA, BHT, TBHQ**
  Synthetic preservatives. BHA is "reasonably anticipated" to be a carcinogen (US NTP).
- **Sodium nitrite, sodium nitrate**
  Can form nitrosamines, linked to cancer, when cooked at high heat. Choose uncured.
- **Sodium benzoate + vitamin C**
  Together they can form benzene, a carcinogen.
- **Titanium dioxide**
  Banned as a food additive in the EU since 2022.
- **Aspartame, sucralose, acesulfame-K**
  Synthetic sweeteners with gut-microbiome and long-term safety questions.
- **"Natural flavors"**
  A catch-all term that can hide dozens of undisclosed compounds. Ask the brand.

GREEN FLAGS

Seals worth trusting

Look for these instead.

- **CMB Certified**
  Ingredients, operations, efficacy and social impact.
- **USDA Organic**
  Grown without synthetic pesticides or GMOs.
- **Non-GMO Project Verified**
  Independently tested for GMO avoidance.
- **Leaping Bunny**
  No animal testing at any stage.
- **MADE SAFE / EWG Verified**
  Screened against known harmful chemicals.
- **Seals, not slogans**
  A seal means a third party checked. Marketing words mean nobody did.

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IN THE BATHROOM

Personal care & beauty

Shampoo, lotion, makeup, deodorant, sunscreen and baby care.

Fragrance / parfum
One word that can hide dozens of chemicals, including allergens and phthalates.

Parabens (methyl-, propyl-, butyl-)
Can mimic estrogen; suspected endocrine disruptors.

DMDM hydantoin, quaternium-15, imidazolidinyl / diazolidinyl urea, bronopol
Formaldehyde releasers. Formaldehyde is a known carcinogen and skin allergen.

Methylisothiazolinone
One of the most common causes of contact allergy. Banned in EU leave-on products.

Oxybenzone, octinoxate
Chemical UV filters absorbed through skin; linked to coral-reef damage. Banned in Hawaii.

Triclosan
Banned from US hand soap in 2016. Suspected endocrine disruptor.

PTFE, anything "perfluoro-"
PFAS "forever chemicals" that persist in the body and environment.

Coal tar
Known human carcinogen (IARC Group 1).

Hydroquinone
Skin lightener restricted in the US and banned in EU over-the-counter cosmetics.

DEA, TEA, cocamide DEA
Can form carcinogenic nitrosamines. California lists cocamide DEA.

Phthalates (DEP, DBP)
Plasticizers often hidden in "fragrance". Linked to hormone disruption.

Mineral oil, petrolatum
Petroleum-derived; can carry PAH contamination unless highly refined.

UNDER THE SINK

Home & cleaning

Sprays, detergents and dish soap: what you breathe and touch.

Benzalkonium chloride, "...ammonium chloride"
Quaternary ammonium compounds ("quats"). Linked to asthma and skin irritation.

Ammonia
Harsh on skin, eyes and lungs. Never mix with bleach.

Fragrance
Same problem as in personal care: undisclosed chemicals you breathe in.

2-Butoxyethanol
Solvent linked to blood and liver effects at high exposure.

Alkylbenzene sulfonates
Petroleum-derived surfactants, harmful to aquatic life.

EDTA
Does not break down easily and can mobilize heavy metals in waterways.

Microplastics, polymer beads
Do not biodegrade and end up in water and the food chain.

Triclosan, "antibacterial"
Contributes to antimicrobial resistance. Soap and water work.

The full list, searchable

Every ingredient we keep out, with the reason:
crunchymamacollective.com/values-standards

Make products that pass?

Apply for CMB Certification:
crunchymamacollective.com/cmb-certification

Sources include the US FDA, IARC, the US National Toxicology Program, EU regulations, the Environmental Working Group (EWG) and the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI).

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