

HI-TECH COLOR: DOWN TO EARTH FACTS

Compagnia Del Colore (CDC) launched 52 shades of ammonia-free coloring cream earlier this year in Italy and will be fully available in the U.S. this fall. The product uses monoethanolamine (MEA) instead, a favored alternative to ammonia for those with sensitivities, but with less lifting power. Cosmetics giant L'Oréal has developed INOA, Innovation NO Ammonia, which uses MEA in combination with a new Oil Delivery System to boost active ingredients into the center of the hair.

SIZE MATTERS

With or without ammonia, providing quality products means quality pigments and active ingredients. Pigments are measured by size: The smaller, the better, the purer. Italian pharmaceutical-grade brand CDC claims their pigments are 99% pure and, as a result, use less ammonia—0.54%. A lesser percentage will have same approx pH, though, explains Westman.

MARKETING AGENDA

Hair coloring lines are appealing to consumers' fear of chemicals by being "eco-friendly" "organic" or "safe and natural," but don't be fooled into thinking they're better because they're ammonia-free or PPD-free.

According to Giannantonio Negretti, president of Italian Group Srl, which manufactures Compagnia Del Colore, some companies that claim to be PPD-free are using substitutes. "Alternatives are not well-known and used as a marketing claim, whereas PPD is demonstrated to be safe, even though it's a big story," he says. Goddard explains that PPD is the term for a classification of dye chemicals. "They start out as a clear colorless molecule and only change color when mixed with hydrogen peroxide which oxidizes the dye molecule, changes its color and its size. When the ammonia swells the hair fiber, the tiny molecule enters the fiber and as it oxidizes it becomes larger and becomes trapped inside the hair shaft. That's what gives it its permanent, longer-lasting result." PPD has been assessed by the Cosmetic Ingredient Review Expert Panel as safe, although an allergen, if you have sensitivities.

The key for both clients and stylists is to be educated and to talk honestly about any concerns, because there are those with allergies to ammonia, PPD, certain pigments in hair color and even botanical or herbal ingredients. "The more successful the salon, the more diverse the clientele," says Minardi. "Somebody is going to be allergic to something so I always recommend a patch test with a new client or a new color brand or formula and clients should ask for one if they have uncertainties!"