

Methylisothiazolinone: still too much of this allergen around

Methylisothiazolinone (MIT) is a chemical mainly used for its preservative properties in many commercial mixtures or products such as paints, coatings, detergents and cosmetics, as well as in mixtures for professional use.

Over the last few years, in France and elsewhere in Europe, there has been an increase in the number of cases of skin allergies to MIT.

This led ANSES to issue an internal request to identify the product categories involving the most exposure to MIT and make recommendations for limiting the exposure of people, whether or not they are already sensitised.

In the context of this internal request, ANSES asked French Poison Control Centres (PCCs) to extract data from their National Database on Products and Compositions (BNPC) in order to identify mixtures containing MIT, the product classes and categories and the associated MIT concentrations. The objective was to describe how this chemical is used by consumers and professionals and identify the products or product categories with the highest concentrations of MIT.

More than 1,500 mixtures have been recorded in the BNPC since 1994, corresponding to 40 product classes and 165 product categories: cosmetics (37%), textile care products (22%), cleaning products (20%), paints (2%), and waxing products/polishes (1.6%). Among the products for professional use, eight classes were identified corresponding to 133 mixtures. Over time, there has been an increase in the number of mixtures containing MIT registered in the BNPC from 2006 (72 mixtures), with a peak in 2009 (282 mixtures) and then a decline until 2014 (92 mixtures).

According to the data extracted from the BNPC, the concentration of MIT in the mixtures was predominantly below 0.5%. More than 40% of the products contained less than 0.1% MIT, which was the average concentration in products

registered in the BNPC in 2014 (concentrations ranging from 0.000009% to 1.2%). For the most commonly identified product classes according to the BNPC, MIT concentrations ranged from 0.17% to 8.5% for cleaning products, 0.08% to 9.9% for paints and 0.31% to 5% for fabric softeners. It is important to emphasise that these preparations containing MIT are often incorporated into commercial products, ultimately increasing the overall concentration of MIT in the mixture.

These data revealed the presence of MIT in a vast range of product uses/categories, for both the public and professionals. **With some products, the concentrations recorded in the BNPC were very high and above the threshold associated with a risk of skin allergies (100 ppm).** This work confirmed the need for action to limit people's exposure to MIT, whether or not they are already allergic. ANSES therefore recommended introducing systematic information on packaging of products containing MIT, regardless of the concentration, to make it easier for sensitised individuals to avoid this allergen. With this in mind, ANSES published comments for harmonising the classification of MIT at European level and limiting its presence in mixtures. **In March 2016, the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) adopted a harmonised classification for MIT: "Category 1A skin sensitiser" with a specific concentration limit in mixtures of 15 ppm.**

Lastly, a work on the analysis of occupational allergic contact dermatitis is currently being conducted through the National Network for the Monitoring and Prevention of Occupational Diseases (RNV3P). The results will help better characterise the occupational sectors at risk and the types of diseases induced.

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