

Holi season: Warnings and recommendations

Read on to find out the adverse effect of Holi colours and to know their organic alternatives

Play it safe this Holi!

Mar 20, 2011, 12.00am IST ■ [Debarati S Sen]



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Holi is one the most colourful , fun and naughty of all Hindu festivals. Colourful because of all the rang, fun because friends get together and play, and naughty because of the traditional bhaang and the harmless flirting or chhed-chhard that usually goes on with it.

However, what most of us do not know are that the colours of Holi can sometimes be extremely harmful. Dr Jamuna Pai, cosmetologist and skincare expert says, "The consequence of Holi is not just spoilt clothes and floors, but the skin and hair too are traumatised due to the presence of chemicals in the colours." She recommends taking a non-sedative anti-allergic tablet like Cetirizine the previous night to prevent any serious and scary allergic reactions.

Till a few decades ago, colours were made up of natural and harmless things like flowers, fruits and vegetables. These were not only soothing to the skin, but also had properties that made them gentle and beneficial. But today synthetic colours have taken their place to adulterate the celebration which is harmful to man as well as detrimental to the environment.

Dr Mohan Thomas, cosmetic surgeon and senior consultant at Breach Candy Hospital says, "These synthetic colours are made up of heavy metals, greases, engine oils, powdered glass and pesticides, which have adverse effects on the skin and other body systems, quite few of them are carcinogenic agents as well. They're terrible"

Thus, rather than being a hallmark of joy, we end up making it a festival of misery for others.

Ritu Tanwar, aesthetician, says, "Since we do not really know who would be using harmful colours on us, it is best to be careful and also be prepared to prevent the toxins from getting too close to our hair and scalp. One of the simplest ways to do this is to use lots of oil on the hair. This will not allow the colours penetrate too deep into the scalp."

Since Holi is a very outdoorsy festival, it is important not to leave home without a thick layer of waterproof SPF sunscreen.

Dr Pai says, "Individuals with a history of eczema or Atopic Dermatitis are at a high risk of developing allergic contact dermatitis to colours and dyes. This will manifest in itching, a red rash and irritation on the area of contact. Such individuals should use a barrier cream (white soft, yellow soft, paraffin) prior to playing Holi. They should avoid using colour on sensitive areas, especially the face and neck."

One of the other simple ways to deal with the harmful colours is by reducing the skin exposure to a bare minimum and wearing clothes that cover the maximum part of your body.

Dr Pai advises, "Apply cold cream/oil on all exposed parts and follow it up with a waterproof sunscreen lotion, make sure to it apply generously on the arms and face."

The colours of Holi can be very drying and they dehydrate the skin. Experts recommend applying vaseline under nails and soles, elbows and other dry areas. This not only keeps the areas hydrated but prevents loss of moisture.

Ritu says, "To counter the harmful effects of synthetic colours, use oils, gels and conditioners generously on your hair and scalp."

It is advisable to use natural/skin friendly and herbal colours, or the ones made by reputed companies using natural products. They are safe and promise colour that washes off easily and are skin-friendly.

When you are back home after celebrating the festival it is important to remove colour and replenish and rejuvenate the skin, body, hair and scalp.

Dr Pai recommends cleaning it with warm water and moisturising soap to scrub off the colours. Use a cream cleanser or baby oil, gently massage off the left over colour.

Cleaning the skin finally of all the colours is important.

A liberal use of cold cream or a moisturiser is good for the skin. Dr Pai adds, "Using a paste of soyabean flour or besan with milk is helpful. A mixture of sea salt, glycerine and a few drops of aroma oil have an anti-bacterial and anti-fungal effect and can take care of the bad and harmful effects of all sorts of chemical colours and dyes." So this Holi, have fun and stay beautiful.

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