

My name is Jennifer Arce and I have been a licensed hairdresser for 18 years. Throughout all of these years I have never experienced any adverse effects from any of the chemicals used daily in the salon, until a product named Brazilian Blowout completely changed my life as I knew it.

My symptoms from this product began when I was the client and my sister Gina was applying it to my hair. Within 10 minutes my eyes were burning, my lungs were burning, I had difficulty breathing and things were quickly escalating into much worse. Since Gina was having issues too we decided it would be best to finish my treatment outside. This included blow-drying the product into my hair and flat ironing each section of the hair 5-8 times at 450 degrees. Even outside we had difficulty breathing and all of our symptoms intensified once we applied the heat from the blow-dryer and flat iron. Every time the flat iron would touch my hair it would produce a huge white cloud of smoke that would not even disperse on a slightly breezy day.

When I got home I was extremely sick and lethargic. My head was pounding, my throat was so sore I could barely swallow, and I was having a hard time breathing. I went to the doctor and she attributed my symptoms to "possible chemical poisoning". She prescribed an Albuterol inhaler for my breathing difficulties and 800 mg. of ibuprofen for my headaches. I have never in my life needed an inhaler before this.

After this treatment I had a hard time doing simple everyday life tasks because of what this product had done to my lungs, and just being at work surrounded by chemicals was a complete struggle. For about 2 months I would have to open all the windows and direct a fan in my face if I had to blow dry or flat iron my hair, because every time my hair would be exposed to heat it would give off the noxious smell of formaldehyde. I tried to avoid applying any heat to my hair because it would intensify my symptoms all over again.

Some of my coworkers started realizing that they had been getting sick ever since this product came into the salon. Many of them had been on antibiotics on and off for months because of the mounting sinus infections they were all getting, along with the raw sore throats and migraines they all had.

After many arguments the owner banned all hair smoothing treatments from the salon once we discovered Brazilian Blowout and other products like it, contained formaldehyde even though they were labeled "formaldehyde free". This was a big deal because people were making \$350 on these treatments, and that's when things got really ugly. There was so much turmoil and infighting going on. There were more coworkers who were getting extremely sick from these treatments too, but would not come forward after seeing how the "sick" people were being treated.

After about two months I started to get better. The FDA even came to the salon for 3 hours and picked up my bottle to test it for evidence. My bottle of "Formaldehyde Free" Brazilian Blowout tested at 9.39-10.46% formaldehyde. Just 7 days later, I came into the salon and within 10 minutes all of my symptoms came back and I was so dizzy I felt like I was about to faint. Some of my coworkers were having these same symptoms and then my sister's nose began to bleed. It bled for 45 minutes and she couldn't get it under control. We found out the salon owner allowed a coworker to do a Brazilian Keratin Treatment by Marcia Teixeira three days prior, despite the ban of these products. I knew then that my coworkers and I

had been “sensitized” to formaldehyde and could never be around this chemical again. Over the course of a few days several of us quit the salon due to our health and concern over these dangerous products. Within days we were then threatened with “legal ramifications” for not giving a 30 day notice.

We moved to a salon that was willing to ban all Hair Smoothing Treatments after showing the owner the research we had collected. We discovered some of this staff had been getting sick too. Unfortunately this did not solve our problem. Since we don’t allow these treatments in our salon some of the stylists will go to their client’s house to perform these treatments. When that client comes back into the salon to get a haircut or color and has her hair blow dried, flat ironed, curled, or is processed under the hood dryer, the fumes that come out of her hair upon heating make me and several of my coworkers symptomatic all over again.

Instantly I get a sore throat, dry mouth, difficulty breathing, a migraine, cough, burning and watery eyes, blurred vision and burning lungs. I get scabs on the inside of my nose that usually last for over a month. My symptoms have recently escalated into bloody noses, blistering rashes, and choking on phlegm in my sleep. I’ve had Bronchitis for the first time in my life and now I sometimes even cough up chunks of blood. My breathing becomes so difficult I’m now on an Albuterol inhaler and also a Flovent inhaler which is a corticosteroid and am now taking Vicodin and Fioricet for my migraines. I’m getting sicker and sicker with every exposure and it’s taking me longer to recover each time. I have never had any type of respiratory problem, nor had I ever used an inhaler before my Brazilian Blowout exposure.

The medical bills for me and my coworkers are piling up and many of them don’t have health insurance. We’ve become financially impacted from all of the doctor’s visits, referrals to see specialists, tons of prescription medications, all of the diagnostic testing, sinus x-rays, chest x-rays, MRI’s, Cat Scan’s, nose probes, breathing tests, blood tests, EKG’s and all of the weeks off of work we have all had to endure because we have been so ill from our exposure to these products. We have been diagnosed with sinus infection after sinus infection, Eustachian Tube Dysfunction, Bronchitis, permanent eye damage, Allergic Rhinitis, Migraines, Sarcoidosis, and even Pneumonia. This is an industry where a good majority of people are self- employed and rent a booth in the salon. Not only do we not get paid if we have the misfortune of getting ill, we have to pay out of our pockets to pay for our booth, even if we are not there, and none of us have disability insurance. This has cost the people in my salon alone THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS of dollars and if this continues it will be costing some us our careers.

Our health and our livelihoods being taken away from us and we are not going to let this happen without a fight. I have been in contact and collecting letters from sick salon workers all across this country. They too have gotten sick from formaldehyde containing treatments and are pleading for someone to help them. We started as total strangers but our stories and symptoms are eerily the same. **They too** are suffering from severe health problems since these products have come into their lives. **They too** have had to quit their jobs to try to get some relief, but many are still suffering because they can’t fully get away from these products. Many of them have been bullied, threatened physically, and threatened to be fired for speaking up about being sick or for not wanting their clients exposed to toxic formaldehyde.

The majority of the people who have written these letters have never even performed or received this service. They're just innocent bystanders trying to go to work and make a living, while getting sick from their exposure to this cancer causing chemical, without their consent. Very much like cigarette smoke, formaldehyde fumes know no boundaries so everyone in the vicinity is exposed. However, one single exposure to the formaldehyde in this treatment, and your life and your health can change in an instant. The woman getting a hair smoothing treatment may be okay with exposing herself to the sensory irritation and carcinogenicity of formaldehyde, but what about everyone else in the room? Salons are filled with clients who have cancer and are going through chemotherapy, clients who are pregnant, clients with asthma, and mothers bringing their kids. Unsuspecting clients are being exposed to dangerous formaldehyde without their knowledge or consent and many of them are getting sick too.

**Ventilation is not the only issue here.** These products are too toxic to be used inside a salon setting. The formaldehyde in these treatments is so toxic that even doing the treatment outside in open air still could not prevent me and my sister from getting sick. Salons will **continue** to use these treatments without proper ventilation. The salons that do have "proper" ventilation will **continue** to have workers that still are getting sick. People will **continue** to do these treatments in their home with no ventilation, if someone doesn't step in and take these products off the market.

With the current laws in place it's made the perfect storm for these companies to continue to make people sick and get away with this, unless somebody steps in to stop it. Brazilian Blowout has been proven to be unsafe by many government agencies, including OSHA and has been labeled adulterated and misbranded by the FDA. This product was even sued by my state and yet is still being sold every day and salon workers and their clients continue to be exposed to high levels of formaldehyde.

OSHA has a strict formaldehyde standard put in place, but because the majority of the salon workers are self-employed...**these rules don't apply to us.** I'm here to urge OSHA to enforce the ventilation standards in salons. If you can't protect the self-employed salon workers **PLEASE** protect our innocent clients.

And finally I am asking the FDA to please issue a voluntary recall of Brazilian Blowout and other Hair Smoothing Treatments that contain formaldehyde.

Thank you for allowing me to share my story and I urge you to please heed the calls for help from salon workers whose health and very livelihood have suffered from the exposure to these products. Our occupation needs your action. Our clients need your protection. Visiting a salon should always be a pleasurable experience...not a potential health hazard.