

Chemical Hair Straightener Cancer Lawsuits

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Recent studies have shown a possible correlation between hair products used primarily by Black women and several types of cancer, including uterine cancer, breast cancer, and endometrial cancer.

Women who have used chemical hair straighteners and were diagnosed with cancer may be able to file a lawsuit. Black women are more likely than others to use chemical hair straightening products.

How Does Chemical Hair Straightening Work?

Hair relaxing, also called [lanthionization](#), causes the hair to straighten. Relaxers and the other methods permanently alter the structure of the hair. The drug interferon alpha can modify hair follicles and cause a permanent change in a person's hair texture.

After the initial relaxing session, there are “re-touches” that are done every four to eight weeks on average as new growth comes in. Many women will have “re-touches” for decades.

Hair straightening chemicals are very common in the United States and around the world. Statistics show that up to 90% of Black and brown women have used hair relaxants. Hair relaxer usage often begins in formative childhood years, and the adolescent years are the period of primary susceptibility to cancers caused by exposure to these chemicals.

Recent Study Linking Hair Chemicals to Cancers

Women who frequently use chemical hair straighteners may have a higher risk of developing uterine cancer than women who have never used the products, according to new findings from a national study that has followed nearly 34,000 U.S. women for more than a decade.

The [National Institutes of Health](#) study defined “frequent use” as more than four times in the previous year, and included any personal use, whether women applied products themselves or had the straighteners applied by others. It did not establish a cause-and-effect relationship between hair straighteners and cancer of the uterus, a form of reproductive cancer that has been increasing in incidence among women in recent years, especially among Black women.

For women in the study who had never used hair straighteners, the risk of developing uterine cancer by the age of 70 was 1.64 percent, the research found, while the rate for frequent users of straighteners was more than doubled at 4.05 percent.

While the increased risk was found among women from all racial and ethnic backgrounds, Black women might be disproportionately affected: Sixty percent of participants who reported using hair straighteners self-identified as Black women, according to the study. Rates of uterine cancer have been rising recently among all women in the United States, but Black women die of uterine cancer at twice the rate that white women do, according to a [report from an expert panel in March](#).

What Cancers May be Caused by Hair Products?

The following types of cancers are being investigated to determine if they may be caused by the use of chemical hair relaxing products:

Uterine Cancer

Every year around 65,000 females develop uterine cancer in the US alone, out of which more than 90% is of endometrial origin. It is commonly diagnosed in the seventh decade, with the mean age being 61 years. The incidence in Black women is twice that of white women. In addition, Black women with uterine cancer carry a poorer prognosis as compared to white women. The NIH study found that women who use chemical hair straightening or relaxing products have a higher risk contracting of uterine cancer. It is this study that really created the statistically significant correlation between Defendants' products and uterine cancer.

Breast Cancer

A [recent study](#), published in the Carcinogenesis Journal by Oxford University, concluded that Black women who used lye-based relaxers at least seven times a year for over 15 years or more had around a 30 per cent increased risk of developing breast cancer, compared with those who used it less frequently.

The US-based researchers examined data from Boston University's Black Women's Health Study, which assessed the medical diagnoses of 50,000 African American women over a 25-year time period plus variable factors that could impact upon their wellbeing. Between 1997 and 2017, some 95 per cent reported using lye-based relaxers and 2,311 developed breast cancers.

Uterine Fibroids

Black women have a higher prevalence of uterine fibroids and tumors than any other ethnicity/racial group. More recently, the National Institutes of Health spent eight-years studying over 46,000 women of all races between the ages of 35–74. They were looking for links between chemical hair relaxers and breast cancer. And, they discovered African American women's breast cancer risk increased risk by 45%. Breast cancer and other reproductive issues, including, fibroid development, are often connected.

There is also another study from the American Journal of Epidemiology further confirms this link. In their group of 23,000 menstruating Black American women, these participants displayed two to three times higher uterine fibroid incidences. In 1997, participants reported on hair relaxer use (age at first use, frequency, duration, number of burns, and type of formulation). From 1997 to 2009, 23,580

premenopausal women were followed for incident uterine leiomyomata. The incidence of uterine leiomyomata is 2–3 times higher in US Black women than in US white women.

Who Qualifies for a Hair Straightening Cancer Lawsuit?

There are specific criteria used to determine if the use of chemical hair relaxers caused cancer in a particular woman. The main factors for filing a lawsuit are:

1. Used chemical hair straightening products.
2. Started using as an adolescent but can be later in life.
3. Used relaxers for several years.
4. Relaxers were applied by professionals or at home
5. Suffered scalp burns, but not required to pursue a case
6. Was diagnosed with uterine cancer or another type of cancer.
7. Does not have a family history of uterine cancer or similar cancer.

It is not necessary that a woman meet all of the above-criteria to qualify for a hair straightening lawsuit, but the more factors that are met makes it a stronger case. If you or someone you care about has been diagnosed with cancer after chemically straightening their hair, you may benefit from talking to a product liability lawyer to evaluate your factors to determine if you are eligible for a hair straightening cancer settlement.

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