

LIFESTYLES OF HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

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## Green Spa? Or Green Wash?

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Greenwashing, within the spa industry and broader marketplace, was the center of discussion at the recent LOHAS conference in Boulder, Colorado.

"Greenwashing" is consumer perception that a company is misleading with regards to its environmental practices or the environmental impact of its product or service.

The term is used when companies clearly spend more money advertising that they are green than they do actually implementing environmentally sound practices. For example, in order to "appear" more green, a company adds images of plants and flowers to their label to entice consumers looking for more natural products. Meanwhile, the product still contains harmful ingredients.

So how do you avoid the "green wash spa" label? Implement truly green practices.

According to the Green Spa Network ([www.greenspanetwork.org](http://www.greenspanetwork.org)), a green spa is "a center for healing, aesthetics and wellness where reducing the spa's environmental footprint is a top priority."

Accordingly, green spas strive to:

- conserve energy and water
- use recyclable materials
- minimize waste
- use certified natural and organic skin care products
- have a responsibility to guests and to the planet to reduce exposure to toxic substances and to minimize hazardous waste generation
- learn about and adopt new environmentally friendly strategies and techniques
- share concern for the Earth's well-being with guests.

In beauty it would appear that the mass market has already leapfrogged the spa community in an effort to meet the conscious consumers appetite for authentic, safer, more natural products and services. For example Whole Foods has already identified more than 250 ingredients that are unacceptable for their premium body care products including parabens, polypropylene and polyethylene glycols, sodium lauryl and laureth sulfates. You can see the full list at [www.wholefoodsmarket.com/products/premium-](http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/products/premium-)

**body-care.php** .

Origins Organics was recently launched claiming to be the “purest products on earth”, and at the same time retailers like Target, and Macy’s with their “Beautiful Planet” concept, have created entire new departments for certified natural and organic beauty products.

**On one hand it is such great news that the demand for natural and organic beauty products is becoming so great that large retailers cannot ignore it, in turn making it more accessible to everyday consumers. On the other, only time will tell if our spa community will step up, raise the bar, and set our own standard in an effort to capture some of the green wallet share of the sustainable, health conscious consumer...that choice is yours!**