



Study: Hair relaxers could pose health danger

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ATLANTA - Last year the FDA issued a warning about the chemical dangers associated with a popular hair styling process called the Brazilian Blowout. A new study now says hair relaxers could be posing a health risk for millions of women.

Recently researchers at Boston University believe they've discovered a link between hair relaxers and fibroids. Experts say it affects African-American women more than other women.

When told of the news, the reaction of one woman was surprising.



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Najah Aziz is the owner of Like the River Salon in Inman Park. She says in any given week, she and her stylists are giving 50 to 60 relaxers. It's a chemical process that breaks down the hair's naturally curly state and straightens it permanently.

Customer Susan Anderson has fibroids. When she heard about the latest research in the Journal of Epidemiology which says there could be a connection between hair relaxers and increased instances of fibroids in African-American women her response was, "I don't believe it."

Dr. Ray Howell of East Atlanta OB/GYN says fibroids are more common in African-American women. They are benign tumors in the uterus that can be very painful, but not deadly.

After studying the journal report he understands how researchers may have come to their conclusions.

"The common link is the thyalates. That's the perfume portion of relaxers. It's believed some of the chemicals related to thyalates may be mimicking estrogen-like materials to cause growth of fibroids," said Dr. Howell.

Howell also says there are too many variables involved to make a direct correlation between hair relaxers and fibroids.

"It's only one study out there. It's a big maybe, so further study definitely needs to be done," Howell said.

Howell says as long as women avoid getting burns or scars from the harsh relaxer chemicals it decreases the chances of thyalates getting into the blood system.

That's why Aziz offers this advice to all women, "stay out of the kitchen," meaning leave the styling to the professionals. Don't try to do your hair at home.

Anderson says she's lived too long and looks too good to let a few fibroids slow her down.