

New bacteria contaminate hairspray

March 7 2008

Scientists in Japan have discovered a new species of bacteria that can live in hairspray, according to the results of a study published in the March issue of the *International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Microbiology*.

“Contamination of cosmetic products is rare but some products may be unable to suppress the growth of certain bacteria,” says Dr Bakir from the Japan Collection of Microorganisms, Saitama, Japan. “We discovered a new species of bacteria called *Microbacterium hatanonis*, which we found contaminates hairspray.”

“We also found a related species, *Microbacterium oxydans* in hairspray which was originally isolated from hospital material. *Microbacterium* species have been identified in milk, cheese, beef, eggs and even in the blood of patients with leukaemia, on catheters and in bone marrow.”

The scientists looked at the appearance and diet of the bacterium, then analysed its genome to show that it is an entirely new species. “It has been named in honour of Dr Kazunori Hatano, for his contribution to the understanding of the genus *Microbacterium*,” says Dr Bakir.

Microbacterium hatanonis is rod-shaped and grows best at 30°C and pH neutral.

Scientists now need to determine the clinical importance of the new species, as similar bacteria have been found to infect humans. “Further testing will establish whether the species is a threat to human health,” says Dr Bakir. “We hope our study will benefit the formulation of

hairspray to prevent contamination in the future.”

Source: Society for General Microbiology

Citation: New bacteria contaminate hairspray (2008, March 7) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-03-bacteria-contaminate-hairspray.html>

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