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**Black Women for Wellness Joins Over 170 Groups to
Demand Johnson & Johnson Halt Global Sales of
Popular Baby Powder Product**

Some samplings of talc have tested positive for asbestos, a known carcinogen

(Los Angeles) Today more than 170 groups from 51 countries are calling on Johnson & Johnson to immediately halt sales of their talc-based Johnson's Baby Powder worldwide.

The groups representing environmental health and justice, women's health, conservation, human rights, consumer rights, public health, educational and municipal institutions, health providers and labor unions also want the company to recall existing inventory in North America that is currently on store shelves.

Johnson & Johnson [announced in May](#) it would permanently stop selling talc-based baby powder in the U.S. and Canada due to dropping demand, but said the company plans to continue selling talc powders in the international market. Johnson & Johnson CEO Alex Gorsky also recently issued a [statement](#) professing support for racial justice and equity. Health advocates want Johnson & Johnson to stop selling potentially toxic talc products to demonstrate its sincerity.

Janette Robinson Flint, Executive Director of [Black Women for Wellness](#) explains, "Black Women for Wellness has known too many Black women suffering from reproductive and breast cancers; we are direct witnesses to the suffering, expense and harm caused to families by cancer. Marketing to African American and Latinx women with the continued sales of those same products containing toxic chemicals in international markets with majority Black & Brown women contradicts what they have said and calls into question the sincerity of their statements."

The demands are in response to tests demonstrating the presence of asbestos, a well-established carcinogen, in random samples of the talc conducted by the federal [Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) and by Johnson & Johnson itself.

Ami Zota, ScD, MS, Associate Professor of Environmental and Occupational Health at [George Washington University Milken School of Public Health](#), explained, "Asbestos is a known human carcinogen, and no amount of this toxic substance is acceptable in our everyday cosmetic products like talc-based baby powder. Since it is nearly impossible to ensure that all talc-based powder products are free of asbestos, these products must be removed from store shelves across the globe. Given the potential links between talc-based powders and ovarian cancer, halting sales of talc-based powders will benefit

women's health especially for women of color, who are disproportionately dying from ovarian cancer.”

A [2016 peer reviewed study](#) showed that “body powder is a modifiable risk factor for [epithelial ovarian cancer] among [African American] women.” The study did not identify brands of talc powder that were used.

Thousands of women are suing Johnson & Johnson alleging that potentially asbestos-laced talc triggered their ovarian cancer. In June, a Missouri appellate court ordered Johnson & Johnson and a subsidiary to [pay more than \\$2 billion](#) in damages to women who claimed their ovarian cancers were caused by the company's talc-based products because of contamination from asbestos.

Internal documents released via litigation revealed that the company has known since the late 1950s that its [talc supplies were sometimes contaminated](#) with asbestos. Talc can become contaminated by asbestos when it is mined because naturally occurring veins of asbestos can run through talc deposits.

Even as cancer concerns grew, the company ramped up its marketing to African-American and Latina women in an effort to “grow the franchise,” according to [documents](#) unveiled by [Reuters](#) and [Bloomberg](#).

Ms. Robinson adds, “Solidarity with racial justice movements is more than media statements, it is action in the boardroom; eliminating practices that perpetuate privilege and profit over people and health; it is taking the loss, as so many of our families have. Solidarity is stopping the manufacture and sale of toxic products at home and abroad. Black Women for Wellness is simply asking Johnson and Johnson to walk their talk.”

Additional comments:

Monica Unseld, Ph. D, MPH, founder of Data for Justice: “Now is the time for Johnson & Johnson to demonstrate its commitment to health equity beyond public statements. This means stopping the targeting Black and Brown communities with toxic products. Now is the time to completely remove the remaining asbestos-containing products from the global market. We are calling on Johnson & Johnson to actively commit to pursuing health equity in ALL communities, not just in select markets. “

M. Isabelle Chaudry, Esq, senior policy manager, [National Women's Health Network](#): “Johnson & Johnson's decision to stop selling its dangerous talc-based baby powder product in North America as soon as its current inventory runs out, but continue to sell it abroad, is an assault on historically marginalized communities, especially in places like Africa, Asia and Latin America, where it has facilities and offices. If ‘racism in any form is unacceptable’ and ‘Black lives matter,’ as its CEO Alex Gorsky states, then J&J must address its own racist practices, including its gross targeting of Black and Brown communities and discontinue producing and selling this product globally.”

Janet Nudelman, director of [Breast Cancer Prevention Partner's Campaign for Safe Cosmetics](#): “While J&J did the right thing when it finally decided to stop selling its

talc-based baby powder in North America, the cosmetic giant's intention to *keep* marketing its potentially hazardous product internationally is reckless, irresponsible and will continue to have a disproportionately negative impact on the health of women of color across the globe.”