Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung

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# Germs in shower gel

Updated BfR Opinion No. 014/2017, 18 July 2017[1]

In a routine sample taken in 2008, an official control laboratory in Germany identified one sample of shower gel as well as two repeat samples from the same batch that were highly contaminated with *Pluralibacter gergoviae* bacteria (formerly *Enterobacter gergoviae)*[2]. The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) has undertaken a health assessment of this shower gel.

To date, the BfR has no information about infections arising fromthe use of shower gel. A determination of the microbial load showed that the sample was contaminated with $10^5$ colony-forming units (CFUs) per gram. Although it can be assumed that most of the bacteria are rinsed off the skin along with the shower gel, infection is still possible through broken skin or sensitive mucosal areas. *Pluralibacter gergoviae* is a type of bacterium that is ubiquitous in the environment. It can occasionally lead to serious bacterial infections in people in poor health or in individuals who have recently undergone surgery. The germs are often resistant to antibiotics and this makes treatment more difficult.

Since the European rapid alert system for consumer products (RAPEX) was introduced, there have been increasing reports of microbial contamination of cosmetic agents. In the period from 2010 to June 2017, eight cosmetic products listed in the RAPEX database were affected by confirmed contamination with *Pluralibacter gergoviae*. Based on the available data, the question of the extent to which consumers are in fact exposed to microbially contaminated cosmetic products cannot be comprehensively answered. The BfR is currently not in possession of suitable exposure data.

The full version of this BfR Opinion is available in German at:
http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/keime-in-duschgel.pdf

[1] This updated opinion replaces BfR-opinion 036/2009 of 13 July 2009
[2] A change in nomenclature has been discussed in 2013 and is now generally accepted (Brady et al., 2013)