Tanning is the chemical process that stabilises hides and skins into leather. 85% of all leathers that are produced around the world are tanned with chromium. Chromium is used in its trivalent state (chromium III), with no harm to workers or people wearing the leather article. Only chromium III has tanning properties. As chromium VI has no tanning properties, tanneries never use any chromium VI based chemical for tanning, and have no intention of ever doing so. Sometimes, a fraction of this chromium III oxidises to form a few mg/kg of chromium VI, which is considered as an allergen for a small proportion of the population. It was to limit this risk of allergic skin reactions that, in May 2015, the European Union has enforced a restriction on chromium VI in leather products that come into contact with the skin. The threshold of this restriction is 3 mg/kg.

Provided that the transformation process in the tannery is carried out correctly, it is possible to prevent the formation of chromium VI in end products. This can be helped by following a few "best practice" rules:

- when tanning, choose a high-quality chromium sulphate;
- do not use oxidising agents;
- finish the process in the wet phase at a low pH (3.5–4.0);
- perform a final rinse;
- do not use ammonia during dyeing;
- use fatliquor that do not oxidise.

To prevent the chromium III from undergoing an oxidation reaction:

- add vegetable tanning agent during the wet phase;
- where the use of vegetable extract is not feasible, the use of synthetic reducing agent is possible (one of which, based on vitamin C is available on the market).

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