

HEALTH

Q&A: Are my two-year-old makeup products safe to use?

After a two-year hiatus from wearing makeup products, those who use cosmetics may be wondering if their old supply is still safe to use. Let's start by looking at what's in those products.



Nora Feranecz of Hungary tries makeup made by makeup artist Mario Dedivanovic's Makeup by Mario brand at City Center Mirdif Mall in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Friday, Oct. 29, 2021. Jon Gambrell / AP

by Anthony Benedetto, For *The Inquirer*

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As mask mandates ease in our region, many of us may be going out into the world for the first time in two years without a mask on. For some, the shift in COVID-19 safety protocols has meant a break in a two-year hiatus from wearing makeup products. Those who use cosmetics may be wondering whether their old supply is still safe to use. Let's start by looking at what's in those products.

Q: What types of ingredients are commonly found in makeup products?

Common makeup product ingredients include water, oil, fragrance, coloring agents, sun blocking agents, and preservatives.

Q: Can those ingredients expire or go bad?

Whether it's a chemical or natural makeup product, yes, there is a certain time when they expire. However, not all products expire at the same time. Most liquid foundation products expire within two years. It is safe to say that mascara and similar types of makeup can expire within three to six months. If a product sits and remains unused for an extended period of time, then bacteria, molds and similar types of germs can accumulate in the closed, dark containers. In short, after two years, it is best to restock your favorite makeup products.

Q: Do powder makeup products have a longer or shorter shelf life than liquid products?

Powder products can last up to two years if stored properly in a dry environment and away from moisture. Mascara and liquid eyeliner should be replaced every three months to prevent risk of bacterial infection. Lipstick can remain usable up to two years, however, it can become contaminated with bacteria that is commonly found in the mouth. When lipstick is used over a fever blister, it becomes contaminated with the virus that causes the blister. It is best not to use lipstick over a fever blister, but if used, the lipstick should be discarded after the fever blister heals.

Q: How can I tell whether a makeup product is no longer safe to use?

Most makeup products will have an odd or rancid odor when they are no longer safe to use. They will also typically change in color or texture.

Q: What could happen if I use old cosmetics?

Some makeup ingredients — even if the product is new — can cause irritant or contact dermatitis. Irritant dermatitis appears as red, itchy and scaly spots on the skin. Allergic contact dermatitis develops over time as an immunological response against a specific ingredient in a makeup product. This also appears red, itchy and scaly. Other types of reactions, such as blocked pores, pimples and facial redness, can occur if a product is too heavy for your skin. For most people, it is best to use a water-based makeup instead of an oil-based product to avoid potential reactions.

Q: What should I do if I experience a skin reaction after using an old makeup product?

If you develop any sort of skin reaction after using a new or outdated makeup product, you should seek the advice and treatment of a dermatologist. Dermatologists are medical doctors who specialize in the treatment of diseases involving the skin, hair and nails.

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