

Cosmetics

People use cosmetics to look and smell good. These products can range from eye shadow to deodorants. They can have many different ingredients. FDA does not test cosmetics before they are put in stores. The law says they must be safe if used in the usual way, or the way the label says to use them.

How do allergies start?

Some people may react to something in a product. For example, they may have itching, redness, rash, sneezing, or wheezing. Allergies may happen the first time you use a product or after you have used it more than once.

Are “testers” at makeup counters safe?

Lots of people use the testers at makeup counters. Testers can have lots of germs because so many people use them. Do you want to test a product at the counter anyway? If so, use a new sponge or cotton swab.

Are labels important?

Yes! Always read them carefully. The law says a label must tell you:

- What the product is.
- If there are things to know about how to use the product safely.
- How much of the product the package contains.

- What company makes the product or distributes it.

Also, if it is sold at retail to consumers, there must be a list telling what's in the product. Usually this is on the label. In any case, it should be in a place where you can see it when you buy it.

How do I know if it's a cosmetic or a drug?

If a product is meant to keep you from getting sick, make you well, or change the way your body works, it is a drug. For example, products to treat dandruff and pimples are drugs. The law treats them differently from cosmetics. For example, they have different rules for how ingredients are listed. Some products are both cosmetics and drugs. For example, a shampoo that is just for washing your hair is a cosmetic. A product for stopping dandruff is a drug. A shampoo that is used for washing your hair and stopping dandruff is both a cosmetic and a drug. It must follow the rules for both cosmetics and drugs.

I have seen the term AHA. What does it mean?

AHA is the short term for alpha hydroxy acid. Cosmetic makers claim that AHAs lessen wrinkles. They say that they soften other signs of aging, too.



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Many people have had skin problems after using AHAs. They have sent complaints to the FDA about:

- Redness
- Swelling
- Burning
- Blisters
- Bleeding
- Rash
- Itching
- Changes in skin color

Can I use AHA products safely?

- Protect your skin from the sun while you are using the product and for a week after you stop using it.
- Buy only products that contain 10 percent AHAs or less.
- Buy only products with pH of 3.5 or more.
- Do a test first on a small patch of skin.
- Stop using the product if you have itching, burning, swelling, or other problems.
- See your skin doctor (called a dermatologist) if you have problems.

Safety tips for beauty

- Follow directions on the label carefully, including all “Cautions” and “Warnings.”
- Keep makeup closed tight when not in use.
- Wash your hands before you put on makeup.
- Do not put on makeup while you are driving.
- Do not share makeup with anyone else.
- Do not add liquid to makeup.
- Stop using a product if you get a rash or

- other problem where you are using it.
- Throw away makeup if the color changes.
- Throw away makeup if it gets an odor.
- Be extra careful not to keep mascara too long. Some companies say three months is long enough.
- Do not use eye makeup if you have an eye infection. Throw away eye makeup you were using when you got the infection.
- Keep makeup out of the sun.
- Do not use spray cans while you are smoking or near a source of heat. It could also cause a fire.

What should I do if I have a bad reaction to a cosmetic?

First, call your doctor to find out how to take care of the problem.

You also can report a problem to FDA. You can find your nearest FDA district office at http://www.fda.gov/ora/fed_state/Small_business/sb_guide/regions.htm) or in the blue pages of your phone book.

You also can call FDA’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN) Adverse Events Reporting System (CAERS) at (301) 436-2405 or send an email to CAERS@cfsan.fda.gov.

FDA Office of Women’s Health <http://www.fda.gov/womens>

To Learn More:

FDA Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition

Phone: 1-888-723-3366
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov>