

# MAKING UP ... IS HARD TO DO!

By Claire Moulds

When you suffer with a long-term skin condition, being able to 'put your face on' is far harder than A (apply), B (blend), C (contour). Whether you want to wear make-up occasionally – for a wedding, night out or job interview – or wish to apply it most days, eczema presents a number of specific challenges that can be difficult to overcome. One of the hardest of these is the number of new ingredients that you will be exposing your skin to.

Cosmetic companies draw on a wide range of substances to create different colours, textures and effects and the risk of discovering a host of new triggers for your eczema can be high. Lengthy ingredients lists can also make tracking down exactly what you've reacted to – in order to avoid it again in the future – like looking for a needle in a haystack, while the terminology can also be confusing.

## Knowledge is power

Before you apply anything anywhere, you need to understand what your skin is about to come into contact with and eliminate any obvious risks. Begin by making a list of ingredients to avoid, starting with substances that you already know that you react to. It might also be worth considering entire ingredient groups.

People with food allergies should also take into account that many food-based ingredients in cosmetic products go under their Latin name, so it may not be immediately obvious that the two are linked.

Common examples are:

**Peanut oil** *Arachis oil*

**Sweet almond oil**  
*Prunus Amygdalus dulcis oil*

**Sesame seed oil**  
*Sesamum indicum oil*

It's also worth avoiding 'known' irritants, regardless of whether you have reacted to them in the past. The Cosmetic, Toiletry and Perfumery Association (CTPA) provides a guide to ingredients that are more associated with sensitisation and to fragrance ingredients that are considered more likely to cause reactions in susceptible people (see [www.thefactsabout.co.uk/document.aspx?fileid=2331](http://www.thefactsabout.co.uk/document.aspx?fileid=2331)). That's not to say that you can't use products that contain these ingredients – you may not be one of the people that reacts to them – but if you want to minimise the risk of your skin responding badly to make-up, it would be logical to add them to your list of things to avoid.

Do not necessarily rely on the sales assistant to guide you when it comes to an ingredient query. While some will be trained on everything that a product contains, others are solely there to offer colour and application advice and, ultimately, to make a sale. If you have any concerns or questions about the contents of a product, make direct contact with the company's head office to ensure you get an accurate answer.

Crucially, you should also check a product's ingredient list **every time you buy it**, regardless of whether you have used it safely in the past. The manufacturer could very well have changed the formulation and added something that isn't compatible with your skin.

## Understand the terminology

There are many common misconceptions surrounding the way products are marketed, and this can lead to a costly mistake, both in terms of your skin's health and the money you've spent. For example:

**'Products made from natural ingredients are safer to use on your skin'** – Your skin doesn't recognise the difference between a natural and a synthetic substance and can react to either.

**'Fragrance-free/unscented/unperfumed'** – All cosmetics that contain any fragrance will have the word 'parfum' in their ingredients list. Check carefully as unscented/unperfumed products sometimes include a small amount of fragrance to mask the natural smell of the ingredients they use.

**'For sensitive skin'** – While manufacturers making this claim will have taken steps to minimise the risk of irritation, this description alone does not guarantee that the product is safe for you to use.

**'Hypoallergenic'** – As it is impossible to guarantee that a cosmetic product will never cause an allergic reaction, this term actually means that the item in question has simply been designed to be **less likely** to cause a reaction. It does not guarantee that it is safe for you to use.

**'Dermatologically tested'** – As there is no agreed standard set for this term, the meaning can vary from company to company with regard to how the product was tested, on how many people and by whom.

**'Buyer beware'** is therefore the watchword when purchasing any new cosmetic product. Never take any wording used to promote the item at face value; instead, ask the **exact meaning** of a term, when applied specifically to the **manufacturer's** product.



## Experiment safely

It goes without saying that you should never apply multiple new cosmetics at once, especially to the same area of skin, as it will then be impossible to determine which has caused any subsequent reaction.

Trialling a new product needs to be a systematic process so that you can minimise risk and obtain a clear-cut result. Ideally, explain your situation to the shop assistant or manufacturer and see if they will give you some free samples to test as the trial and error process can be not only time consuming and frustrating but expensive as well!

Before using any make-up product on your face, apply a tiny amount to an unaffected area of your body, such as the crease of your elbow, daily for 5 days. If there is no reaction after this time, try applying a small amount to your face on three consecutive days. If there is still no reaction, then it is likely that you can continue using the product – but be sure to monitor even the tiniest changes in the area to which it is applied and stop using it immediately if your skin begins to show any sign of a reaction.

Use medical moisturisers to remove make-up at the end of the day – these are just as efficient and effective as cosmetic make-up-remover products – and be extra conscientious with your skin-care routine to ensure that your skin is in the best condition it can possibly be when introducing new products.

## Avoid contamination

While it's impossible to create a sterile environment at home, hygiene is vital when it comes to your make-up, the containers it is kept in and the tools you use to apply it.

Ideally, apply your make-up with clean hands but if you use applicators or brushes wash them regularly as these transfer bacteria and germs from your skin to your make-up and back again. Giving them a hot wash once a week (ideally with soap, detergent or a mild shampoo) will help to minimise the risk of infection. As these cleaning agents may be irritating to your hands, wear suitable gloves. Never share your make-up or applicators/brushes with anybody else.

If infection strikes, you should throw away any make-up or equipment that may have become contaminated, in order to avoid re-infection. Buying smaller, less expensive sizes of products at the outset is therefore a good idea.

It's also important to be aware of the shelf-life of cosmetic products, which can be as little as 6 months. Check the packaging or ask the manufacturer and – to make it easier to remember when something needs to be thrown out – mark the date it was opened on the label.

## Back to basics

In its purest form, mineral make-up is a fine loose powder comprising only mineral ingredients combined to produce a range of colours. It can then be used as a foundation, concealer, blusher, bronzer or eye shadow. Because it is lightweight in texture and non-comedogenic (i.e. less likely to block skin pores), mineral make-up allows your skin to 'breathe' while providing sufficient coverage to even out skin tone and hide minor blemishes. Anecdotal evidence has shown that mineral make-up is generally less irritating for people with eczema, but obviously what works for one person won't necessarily work for another.

Launched in the 1970s, mineral make-up has taken the cosmetic world by storm in recent years, with people attracted by the limited number of ingredients used and the elimination of many of the additives found in traditional make-up that aggravate sensitive skin. The success of mineral make-up has also led to some companies using the word 'mineral' on their packaging even though the actual minerals comprise a very small part of the finished product. By checking the ingredients list you can see which ones constitute the majority of a product as these are listed in descending order. The most common ingredients found in mineral cosmetics include:

**Titanium dioxide** – manufactured from titanium, it is commonly found in the mineral rutile (beach sand), and is approved as a physical sunscreen.

**Zinc oxide** – manufactured from the mineral zincite, it is also an approved physical sunscreen and is known for its anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties.

**Mica** – occurs naturally but in cosmetics is a manufactured mineral, which provides shimmer.

**Iron oxides** – are primarily used as colourants and are synthesised under strict laboratory processes.

One ingredient to avoid is talc. Although a mineral, talc has a drying effect on the skin. Unfortunately, a number of high-street brands include it in their mineral make-up products so, once again, check the content list.

Another ingredient to steer clear of is bismuth oxychloride. Although found in many mineral cosmetics, this ingredient is widely recognised as a potential skin irritant that can cause itching and rashes, and even trigger acne breakouts.

## Choosing a brand

Each of the brands below has been chosen for inclusion on the basis of its commitment to producing mineral products that do not contain either talc or bismuth oxychloride. They also display comprehensive ingredient lists on their websites.



Smoke and Mirrors Smoky Eye Kit £45.00



24-Karat gold dust shimmer powders £14 (available in gold, rose gold, silver, bronze and champagne)

### Jane Iredale

For further information, including stockist details, call **020-8438 3277** or visit [www.janeiredale.co.uk](http://www.janeiredale.co.uk)

### Barefaced Beauty

For further information, including stockist details, call **(01525) 234044** or visit [www.barefacedbeauty.co.uk](http://www.barefacedbeauty.co.uk)

Starter Kit £45 | Foundation £14  
Eye Shadow £8



Angel Eyes Kit £24



Blush £10.99

### Earthnicity Minerals

For further information, including stockist details, call **020-3137 1416** or visit [www.earthnicity.co.uk](http://www.earthnicity.co.uk)

Eye Shadow £5.99 | Foundation £16.99



Foundation £27.50

### INIKA

For further information, including stockist details, visit [www.inika.co.uk](http://www.inika.co.uk)  
Eye Shadow £14.50