

Keeping up appearances

Replace your old cosmetics to avoid future breakouts and blemishes

BY KELLY FLATLEY

In setting out to purge your unwanted wares, the first alcoves you'll likely target are your bedroom wardrobe, possibly the living room closet, and perhaps the kitchen cupboard — and all for good reason.

But often overlooked in the spring-cleaning task is another nook — the medicine chest, filled with the products you've collected over the years that once prom-

ised to reveal hidden youthfulness and expose your most dapper appearance.

Unlike other products stored in your medicine chest that come stamped with definitive expiration dates, our less essential goods — running the gamut from mascara to moisturizer to lip balm — come without the same guidance.

However, there are some guidelines that should be followed.

PUT YOUR BEST FACE FORWARD

"Manufacturers typically make (cosmetic) products to last only a month to two months, assuming that buyers are going to use them on a daily basis," said Diana Dolling-Roff, general merchandise manager at the cosmetic counter of Town



Photo by Michael Bocchier

& Country Apothecary in Ridgewood.

Discard anything that's been in your cabinet for much longer than two months. If it's gone untouched that long chances are it's not going to be used at all, said Dolling-Roff. "Often we tend to buy more than we really need," she says. "I tell my customers to limit the number of products they purchase because they'll end up throwing half of them away."

While it's possible to curb your impulse to purchase in the future, the shelf-life of the cosmetics that already sit idly in your drawer can negatively impact your personal health and appearance. ➤

BRUSHING UP

One way to avoid bacteria build-up is to clean brushes and sponges regularly, says Dolling-Roff. "With pressed powder, for example, excessive use of the applicator causes it to become spoiled," she says. "Oil from your skin is passed onto the applicator, which causes the oil to contaminate the makeup. It's best to clean brushes on a regular basis."

Wash cosmetic brushes frequently, said Steven Snook, fragrances and cosmetics manager at Neiman Marcus in Paramus. "They should be cleaned once a week," he says. "I tell people not doing it is like not washing your hair for a week."

Although cleaner specifically made for brushes is available, old-fashioned soap and water will work just as well, says Dolling-Roff. Snook recommends the same. "The ingredients in the cleansers made for brushes often contain a little bit of alcohol, which can be drying to the hair," he says. "Anything you'd use to wash your own hair, baby shampoo or regular shampoo, is fine."

If you use a sponge to apply makeup, Saida Baxt, M.D. of Baxt Cosmedical, a

practice focusing on cosmetic dermatology in Paramus, recommends washing it in a dishwasher on a sterilization cycle.

THE EYES HAVE IT

Aside from contamination from a makeup applicator, applying products by hand also creates an ideal setting for bacteria to thrive, both in the makeup and on the face. Perhaps most prone is the area around the eyes.

"It's a high risk area for infection," says Baxt. Unlike the rest of the face, which has a high level of circulation that wards off infection, Baxt says, the eye area is without the same safeguard.

While it's rare for the face to develop a rash or reaction from bacteria, eyes are much more likely to be affected. Using a finger to apply product around the eye, such as moisturizer, greatly increases that risk. "Most of the time it's pink eye, which usually comes from somewhere else, and gets into the makeup," says Snook. He notes that at that point, all eye makeup needs to be thrown out, to avoid recontamination.

To avoid a serious eye infection all

together, Dolling-Roff suggests using a sterile applicator, such as a Q-Tip or cotton pad, to apply eye makeup.

In plumping eyelashes with mascara, Snook advises against pumping the wand. "Never pump the wand," he says. "It pushes air into the mascara, which can push bacteria into the tube."

Baxt says it's best to replace mascara and other eye makeup every six months, unless, of course, any irritation from a product occurs before then.

KEEP YOUR LIPS SEALED

More cream-based cosmetics that don't require applicators, like lipstick and lip balm, can also be cleaned to keep sanitary and wearable for as long as possible.

Dolling-Roff says wiping the tip of the lipstick or lip balm itself with a sterile cotton pad, dabbed with rubbing alcohol is effective.

Keeping lipstick and lip balm sealed will preserve their shelf life. However, when applying, be aware of open cuts or fever blisters, Baxt cautions. Be sure to

APPEARANCES
FROM PAGE 45

toss any product that may come in contact with open sores.

Cream-based foundations will typically show a telltale sign when they are due to be discarded. If it appears separated, like oil and water, it's time to replace it. Rebecca Baxt, M.D., also of Baxt Cosmedical, suggests that if you pour the bottle and liquid shows at first, it's best to get rid of it.

"Many of these products don't have an expiration date," she says, "but I would say if it's been a year, throw it away."

CHEMICAL REACTIONS

And, with the warmer months soon approaching, Rebecca Baxt stresses the importance of using sunscreen properly, within a particular time frame. "If you've had sunscreen for more than a year, it needs to be thrown out," she says. "The active ingredients begin to decompose, which increases your likelihood of sunburn. The chemicals are just no longer stable."

"The chemicals don't necessarily go bad," says Saida Baxt, "but there's less efficacy and a false sense of security if you're using sunscreen that's dated. A whole bottle should be used every season, and it should be applied frequently



Photo by Michael Bocchieri

and aggressively."

In preserving all products, a few rules apply to all. "Keep everything in a cool, dry place," says Rebecca Baxt. "Keep them out of heat, refrigeration."

Though refrigerating products may seem like a trendy method to keep them from spoiling, it is often not recommended. "It may harm some products or change their molecular structure," says Snook.

Baxt
Cos Medical NJ



351 Evelyn Street
Paramus, NJ 07652
201.265-1300
800.848.3010 Toll Free
201.265.3737 Fax

Saida Baxt, MD, FAAD

Rebecca Baxt, MD, FAAD

• Diplomates American Board of Dermatology

Specializing in:

- Botox (FDA Approved)
- Facial Consultation Skin Care
- Intense Pulsed/Light/Photorejuvenation
- Collagen/Cosmodern
- Smoothbeam for acne & fine lines

Visit us at www.cosmedical.com