

Halloween Face Paint and Cosmetics: A Safety Guide

We've all been there. We paint our faces for a Halloween costume, but we don't read the label. However, using the wrong kind of paint — or using the right kind improperly — can lead to irritation and potential damage to your skin and eyes.

Here are a couple of tips to keep you and your children safe this Halloween.

Use body-safe paint

This may seem obvious, but you should only use paint or makeup that is intended for use on your skin. Don't be tempted by the acrylic paint aisle in a craft store — no matter how perfect the color matches your costume. And just because a paint says "non-toxic" does not mean it's safe for use on your skin.

"Non-toxic has no meaning behind it in terms of a FDA regulatory policy," said [Dr. Shasa Hu](#), dermatologist at the University of Miami Health System. "Over the counter cosmetics are not rigorously regulated by the FDA so they can make a lot of claims. That's why, if you have sensitive skin, you should really test a small area behind your ear or on the inner wrist. Apply the paint, leave on for a good three to four hours, then wash off (to see) if you have any allergic reaction."

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“If there’s any person who has an allergy to nickel, chromium, adhesives, or fragrances, then you really need to be careful about what you put on your body because those are the main ingredients.”

Avoid using paint or glitter near the eyes

According to the FDA, glitter intended for use on the skin must be .008 microns or smaller and made of polyester. Despite those parameters, “You should not use glitter anywhere near your eye,” says Dr. Hu. “The skin of your eye is especially prone to irritation. Even worse, if you accidentally get glitters or abrasive particles into your eyes, you can get a corneal abrasion.”

Contrary to what the packaging model may look like, don’t run the risk of getting paint or glitter in your eye just to achieve the perfect face paint applique. Even some products that claim to be safe near eyes can bother your skin.

What you put on your skin matters

Avoid putting paint or glitter on open sores or wounds — and yes, this includes zits. You don't want to further irritate your skin.

After use, remember to wash your face gently to remove any cosmetic, paint, or glitter applique.

“Sometimes you also have to take off these products with specific chemicals so that's adding another potential irritant.”

Picking a safe option for body and face paint, cosmetics, or glitter can be tricky. It's “difficult to navigate what's safe because some companies throw in a lot of names, like natural. But natural doesn't have to mean that all the ingredients are natural—only a few,” says Dr. Hu.

If you're unsure about what type of cosmetic to purchase, check with your doctor. They can help navigate the world of Halloween skin safety.

Cara Tremols is a contributing writer for UMiami Health News.

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