

7 Top Beauty Blunders – Solved!

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Some situations require a pro, like building a house, fixing a broken leg... and making yourself gorgeous. That's right, DIY beauty-boosters are possible, but often backfire – leading to painful blisters and embarrassing rashes. Find out how to fix common cosmetic mishaps...

Beauty has a price, and sometimes it's high, especially when we do it ourselves with self-tanners, hair color kits and at-home skin peels.

Instead of a stunning makeover, you're just stunned - by breakouts, burns and bad hair.

"While it's more convenient and often less expensive to do certain beauty treatments yourself, some are more dangerous or raise the risk of mistakes when they're not done by a professional," says Francesca Fusco, M.D., assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York.

"But most mistakes can be fixed with a few simple solutions," Fusco says, like soothing tea compresses for under-eye bags.

Others, like an infected burn from a flat iron, require a doctor's care.

Here's how to avoid and treat common beauty blunders.

Blunder #1: Breaking out in a rash from a new beauty product

Certain wrinkle, acne and skin-lightening products, among others, have active ingredients like retinols, benzoyl peroxide and glycolic acid that can result in red, inflamed skin.

Beauty Rx: "Make chamomile tea, let it cool, then soak cotton pads in it," suggests Cleo Paula, lead aesthetician at New York's Deva Spa. "Squeeze out extra moisture and place pads on the affected area for about 10 minutes."

Then gently remove the pads, pat skin dry (don't rub, which will further irritate skin) and dab on a cream with soothing aloe vera.

If that doesn't work, try a stronger anti-inflammatory, such as over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream.

Other tips:

- Look for products that say "unscented" (not "fragrance free," which means potentially irritating chemicals were used to mask any scent).
- Do a patch test when trying a new product by dabbing it on a small area of skin, like your wrist or behind an ear.
- If cosmetics often cause you to break out, look for those made for sensitive skin. (It will say so on the label.)

Blunder #2: Burning your skin with a curling iron

Curling irons and flat irons heat to high temperatures, making it easy to scorch sensitive skin on your scalp or face.

Beauty Rx: "Apply a cold compress [like ice or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel] for about 10 minutes and repeat as needed if you feel pain," Fusco says. "Then apply an over-the-counter topical burn cream, bacitracin or A&D ointment," and cover the burn with a bandage.

If a blister forms, don't pop it. That could allow bacteria to enter and cause an infection.

"If the burn becomes infected, see a dermatologist" for prescription treatments, she advises.

While it heals, don't apply makeup or acne medication to the area.

"If your makeup has bacteria in it, there's a risk of infection," she says. And "acne medications, which contain salicylic acid, benzoyl peroxide, retinoids or other acids, will burn skin further."

Also, avoid the sun, which can leave a scar or dark spot after the burn heals.

Blunder #3: Looking orange after using a self-tanner

Applying self-tanner is the safest way to get a tan, but many women end up with a glow that looks faux.

Beauty Rx: “If you recently applied your self-tanner, take a shower or bath as soon as possible,” Paula suggests.

If you have time for a bath (which is more effective than a shower), add a cup of fresh lemon juice to the water and soak about 20 minutes.

“The acid in lemon juice helps cut the color and any product buildup,” she says.

You can also gently rub your body with a scrub or loofah. This helps exfoliate the top layer of skin, which is what self-tanners’ active ingredient (called dihydroxyacetone, or DHA) adheres to.

Next time you self-tan, remember less is more. Apply a small amount, let it dry and see the results. If it’s not dark enough, you can always add more later.

Blunder #4: Getting red bumps after shaving your bikini line

Skin along the bikini line is thin and sensitive, and wax, razors or depilatories can irritate it. After removing the thick, coarse and wiry hair, it can curl into skin, creating an ingrown hair.

“Your body sees this hair as foreign, so it responds with inflammation and red bumps,” says Arielle Kauvar, M.D., associate professor of dermatology at New York University School of Medicine.

Beauty Rx: Soothe bumps and irritation with a small amount of over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream. It’s safe for this area, but can thin the skin if overused. Make sure to apply the cream only to skin and not allow it to get inside genitalia.

For a natural option, apply a moisturizing lotion that contains calming green tea, aloe or cucumber.

Or use lotion made for ingrown hairs with salicylic acid, allantoin and arnica, ingredients that soothe skin and exfoliate it.

Other tips:

- Wax or shave in the direction of hair growth, and then apply a topical drugstore antibiotic, like Neosporin. This will reduce bacteria that normally live on the skin and prevent it from getting into hair follicles and triggering an infection.
- Use a soft body brush or exfoliating gloves on the area, gently rubbing skin against the direction of hair growth, Paula suggests. “This helps to remove dead skin cells, which can clog pores and cause bumps,” she says.

Blunder #5: Using DIY hair products that leave hair dry

Perming, straightening, bleaching and coloring products use harsh chemicals, which can damage and strip hair of shine.

“Also, many people further damage hair with blow dryers and flat irons,” causing frizziness, says Lorraine Massey, author of the forthcoming *Curly Girl: The Handbook* (Workman, 2011) and co-owner of Devachan Salon in New York.

Beauty Rx: Try a leave-in conditioning treatment at night. Mix your favorite conditioner (preferably one made for dry hair) with a teaspoon or two of olive or jojoba oil. Apply to dry hair, cover with a shower cap and drift off to sleep. (Put a towel over your pillow to avoid staining.)

“The next morning, rinse hair and apply conditioner, leaving some on your locks,” Massey advises.

You can also warm conditioner in a microwave and apply to hair that you’ve just washed with a sulfate-free shampoo.

“Sulfates are detergents, which strip hair of its natural oil, causing dryness and the frizzies,” she says.

Next, wet a shower cap with hot water and put it on your head. Then take a blow dryer and wave it over your head (but not directly on the shower cap.)

“The extra heat helps the conditioner penetrate better,” Massey explains.

Leave it on for another 30-45 minutes.

Other tips:

- “Use conditioner daily; deep condition at least once a week,” she advises.
- Use cool settings on blow dryers or use a diffuser. Or “let hair air dry,” she says.

Blunder #6: Burning from a tanning bed

Tanning beds may seem safe (and are often touted as safer than the sun), but you still can get a sunburn – even with less than 15 minutes of exposure to their ultraviolet (UV) rays.

Beauty Rx: Soothe the pain and redness by soaking a washcloth in cool, full-fat milk and applying it to burned skin. Leave it on for 5-10 minutes and reapply as needed.

“The lactic acid in milk helps reduce inflammation and redness, and the fat soothes skin,” Fusco says.

Apply an over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream two to three times a day. Or spray on a soothing, post-sun product like Solarcaine, which contains the topical anesthetic lidocaine.

Clean the area with a soap-free cleanser (soap’s detergents are too drying), and hydrate skin daily with a gentle moisturizer that has aloe.

No matter how itchy skin gets, don’t scratch or you raise the risk of infection.

Blunder #7: Poking your eye while applying mascara

If the mascara wand lands in your eye, not on the lashes, you may end up with simple irritation or a scratched cornea. Here’s how to tell:

First, keep your eye closed or taped shut (using first aid tape) for comfort. If pain or irritation disappears quickly, there’s probably nothing to worry about.

“But if the pain is significant, your vision is blurred or suddenly becomes light sensitive, or you have a continuous feeling that something is in your eye, you may have a scratch on your cornea,” says Joseph Eviatar, M.D., assistant clinical professor of ophthalmology at New York Medical College.

Beauty Rx: For a scratched cornea, see “an ophthalmologist [in the office or emergency room] within several hours,” Eviatar says. The doctor will probably prescribe an antibiotic, he adds.

Then “follow up to make sure there’s no infection, which can lead to vision loss,” he says.

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