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How to Clean Your Makeup Brushes (and How Often You Should Do It)

Kate Sullivan, Kristi Kellogg | 7/4/17



We paint, contour, and flush our faces with makeup brushes every day, but how often are those brushes being cleaned after the fact? Turns out, not enough. (Shocker.) According to dermatologists and makeup artists, we should be sudsing up our tools on a weekly basis — at least — in order to prevent bacteria buildup, which can ultimately led to unwanted breakouts. Read on to find out how to clean up your makeup brushes the right way.

First of all, how often should you clean your makeup brushes?

Most dermatologists will tell you to soak your tools, especially foundation and concealer brushes, once a week — at minimum — to prevent product buildup. Because these brushes are used on your face, the cleaner, the better, says Bobbi Brown. "Brushes that are used around the eyes should be cleaned at least twice a month," she says. "All others can be washed once a month."

According to makeup artist Ashleigh Ciucci, soaping up your makeup brushes regularly can extend the life of the bristles and make for a better makeup application. "Brush hairs and sponges are porous, so they hold onto oils, debris, and bacteria," she says. "If your brushes are dirty, your application will be spotty and blending will be difficult."

What should you use to clean your makeup brushes?

The best (and most thorough) method for cleaning your tools requires only water and either a gentle soap (regular soap formulas can dry out the brush's bristles, especially if they are made of natural hair) or brush cleanser. (Easy, peasy.)

How do you actually clean the brushes?

Follow these seven steps for cleaner, good-as-new brushes and blenders.

1. Wet the bristles with lukewarm water.

2. Place a drop of makeup brush cleanser or soap into the palm of your hand.
3. Gently massage the tips of the bristles in your palm.
4. Rinse the bristles.
5. Squeeze out the excess moisture with a clean towel.
6. Reshape the brush head.
7. Let the brush dry with its bristles hanging off the edge of a counter, thereby allowing it to dry in the correct shape. Never let your brushes dry on a towel — the bristles can become mildewed.

Mid-wash, keep the base of the brush head away from soap and water. The bristles are glued to the base, and water and detergent can cause the glue to disintegrate and the bristles to come loose and shed. Do not dry vertically — this will cause water to leak into the ferrule [the piece that joins the bristles to the wand], which will also loosen the glue and lead to bristle loss.

Do you recommend any makeup brush cleaning products?

Two products stand out: the [2X Sigma Spa Brush Cleaning Glove](#) and [Vera Mona Color Switch](#).

Vera Mona Color Switch

The Vera Mona Color Switch uses a sponge that looks exactly like a stipple sponge, but cleans makeup brushes without soap or water. (Magic!) To use, simply swirl your brushes around the sponge, and just like that, your brushes are squeaky clean. According to cosmetic chemist Randy Schueller, the key lies in the sponge's coarse, porous structure. "The friction of the bristles scraping against the sponge is what gives the product its cleaning effect," he says. That's it. No special chemicals or secrets. Just make sure to wash the Color Switch sponge routinely to prevent bacteria growth, says Schueller.

2X Sigma Spa Brush Cleaning Glove

The 2X Sigma Spa Brush Cleaning Glove features two sides (one for eye brushes and one for face brushes), eight cleaning textures, and a double-thumb feature, and it comes in four colors. According to the brand, using the glove to wash your makeup brushes will result in a faster, more effective deep clean.

Allure contributor Maddie Aberman tried it out — here's what she had to say: "This thing means business. The different textures allowed me to massage soap deep into the bristles of even my densest face brushes. I got out more gunk than I ever have before, but it was gentle enough that I didn't feel I was causing any damage. The double-thumb feature makes it easy to flip over to the eye side, and the best part was that I was able to wash ten eye-shadow brushes at a time. The water ran clear faster than when I use my hands alone, and the ridges between the thumb and index finger helped me work the bristles back into a perfect point before I let them dry."

What are the best makeup brush cleansers?

We love [Shu Uemura](#) and [Sonia Kashuk](#). For a DIY solution, try using one part baby shampoo to four parts water. Ciucci prefers to use a moisturizing shampoo for a deep clean. "For really dirty brushes, you can apply the shampoo directly to the wet bristles and massage." [Mario Dedivanovic](#), a.k.a. Kim Kardashian's makeup artist, has a special DIY recipe for de-griming his tools. He doesn't use any fancy [dry shampoo-like sprays](#) or really a product formulated for the job at all. Instead, he uses two products you very well might already own: baby shampoo and tea-tree oil. Dedivanovic flashed a picture of the power duo alongside the army of brushes that needed cleansing on Snapchat recently.

The addition of tea-tree oil is surprising, but it actually makes sense. It's antimicrobial and helps kill acne-causing bacteria. Plus, you can use it with leave-in conditioner to keep hair hydrated.

How often do I need to replace BeautyBlenders and/or sponges?

Regular makeup sponges (the inexpensive kind that come in bulk bag) aren't meant to be reused. Microbial-resistant sponges, such as BeautyBlenders, on the other hand, are meant to be reused and can be safely used for three to four months. As with makeup brushes, make sure to clean your BeautyBlenders at least once a week, as the sponges can "become filled with skin cells and bacteria can overgrow in that area," says Ava Shamban, a Beverly Hills-based dermatologist.

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