


Spring clean your beauty life

We sanitize our hands about a million times per day at this point, but your makeup kit needs some love, too. Yep, those brushes and sponges can harbor harmful bacteria and even, gasp, microscopic dead mites between the bristles. (Sorry to go there, but we thought you should know.)

Luckily, regular cleaning can nix those nasties, keep your tools in top shape and ensure your skin stays healthy. Here's how...



If you haven't washed your makeup brushes like ever, you might want to read this...

SCRUB, SCRUB, SCRUB

It's time to show your beauty tools some TLC. "Bacteria builds up on brushes," explains celeb makeup artist and self-described "clean freak" Jamie Greenberg. "Not only is it gross, it can lead to breakouts."

Once a week, deep clean your brushes and sponges with a cleanser like the Beautyblender Solid Unscented Sponge & Brush Cleanser (\$16, beautyblender.com). "Add some water then swipe your brush back and forth over the soap to work out whatever is in there," says Greenberg. Rinse them, gently squeeze out all the water and then lay flat with the bristles hanging off the edge of a table so they dry completely.

If you're in a rush and, well, it's been a while since you last bathed those bristles, opt for a quick wash. Spritz a liquid cleanser like Cinema Secrets Pro Cosmetics Professional Grade Makeup Brush Cleaner (\$12, amazon.com) on the bristles and rub them back and forth on a towel to wipe out built-up product. (This formula is rinse-free, which = faster!)

If you regularly find yourself faced with less than sparkling tools, consider doubling your supply. "Think about getting a second set of your favorite brushes so you always have clean ones," says Greenberg.

KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO TOSS IT

We've all been guilty of holding on to our products and tools for a little too long. Greenberg's rule? "If you take out a product and notice that the look, smell or texture is different, get rid of it." And if it's not working how it's supposed to, that's also a good sign it's time to chuck it. Most important: Get rid of any wet products that get up-close and personal with your eyes (like mascara and liquid liner) every six months to avoid infection.

As for your brushes and blenders, toss 'em when the bristles start to fray, shed or lose their shape. If your tools become too pinched or squashed, then they simply won't be up to the job.



KEEP FORMULAS FRESH

Have you ever noticed how even your newest powder formulas can quickly get hard or crusty on top? "Oils from your skin can get into your brushes, transferring on to your products and forming a film," Greenberg says. Ick. Start fresh by scraping away the top layer with a clean spoolie to reveal the new powder underneath.

Luckily, pencil products, like eyeliners, just need a quick sharpening to stay clean. And when it comes to cream blushes, shadows and foundation, always wash your hands before dipping your fingers in (or risk spreading germs all over your face). "Try using a reusable beauty spatula to put some product on the back of your hand rather than digging into the pot itself," she recommends. Our fave? S&T Inc. Beauty Spatulas (\$8 for two, amazon.com).



USE SMARTER STORAGE

This is going to be tough to hear—but tossing all of your brushes and makeup into one bag is a recipe for contamination. Look for makeup organizers with separate compartments for makeup and brushes, like the Kusshi Pocket Organizer (\$39, kusshi.com).

And when you're not on-the-go? Keep your brushes displayed in a cup or vase. "I like keeping brushes out because the bristles get bent out of shape if they're stuck in a bag all the time," says Greenberg. (Just keep them out of the bathroom and away from the toilet, please!) Besides, once they're sparkling clean, they look extra pretty on your desk or vanity.