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Can Covering Your Sunburn With Makeup Make It Worse?



Summer is all about trying to pack as much fun as possible into three too-short months: trips to the beach, brunches *al fresco*, and afternoon BBQs that somehow don't end until 2 a.m. But fun can have consequences — and we're not just talking about the inevitable hangovers. [Sunburns](#) are also high on the list of unpleasantities that we've all suffered through at least once in our lifetimes.

You can spend the entire weekend slathered in aloe and taking milk baths, but when Monday rolls around and you have to head to the office, another problem arises: covering up your sore, red skin to hide the evidence of all that *fun* you had. But you might want to think twice before smoothing on that full-coverage Too Faced foundation — according to the experts, putting makeup on over a sunscreen can do more harm than good.

"It's definitely not helpful," says dermatologist Kenneth Howe, MD, of [Wexler Dermatology](#). "Sunburned skin suffers physical damage from excess ultraviolet radiation, which in turn triggers an inflammatory reaction. Makeup, particularly

heavy products, runs the risk of further aggravating the situation." If you *must* wear makeup, there are preemptive steps you should take to prevent further damage. "Moisturize first to serve as your armor against any products you are putting on," says North Carolina-based dermatologist [Sheel Solomon, MD](#).

Beyond skin care, the products you use and the way you apply them can make all the difference in your healing process. Both dermatologists stress that it's important to apply your makeup gently enough where you aren't agitating the already-damaged skin and overall being counterproductive — using "pain as your guide" on whether to stop. Go for soft makeup brushes, and if you can, Dr. Solomon advises working with a damp sponge that won't tug at the skin. It's also just as crucial to remember to gently remove your makeup afterwards as it is to gently apply, Dr. Howe points out.

As for products, both dermatologists recommend using [mineral makeup](#). "When you have a sunburn, the fewer chemicals, the better," says Dr. Solomon. "A mineral powder foundation would be a good bet because it's lighter than a liquid or cream formula and can still provide good coverage, depending on the brand." However, if any product is stinging or your skin starts peeling at any point, it is strongly advised that you stop the application there.

Dr. Solomon also recommends sticking to a minimal routine and looking for products with moisturizing properties. "This will help keep your skin hydrated, and [products that have SPF](#) will help prevent any further damage," she says. She adds that using a yellow or green concealer will counteract the redness from the burn, if desired.

But there's at least one situation in which you shouldn't be applying makeup *at all* on sunburned skin: if it's blistering, which turns a standard sunburn into an open wound. "The presence of blisters means you have a deep burn," says Dr. Howe. "The protective barrier of the skin has been lost, meaning it blistered off, and so any makeup you apply will reach tissues underneath the skin barrier." says Dr. Solomon echoes that precaution: "Allow the blisters to heal and protect yourself from infection."

Overall, it's imperative that you turn to a doctor rather than makeup when there are blisters involved or any other signs of infection. If your situation is less severe, and you absolutely *must* cover it up, then go ahead and heed the derms' advice to do it in the safest way possible. Just be careful — and remember to take more care with your sun protection next time, so you can worry less about a sunburn and more about how to cure a mimosa hangover.

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