

Mineral makeup, anyone?

It's the newest beauty trend to hit the market. Is it really as skin-friendly as claimed?

BY CRISELDA UY

So, is mineral makeup really better than traditional cosmetics? *HealthToday* gives you the lowdown on this.

What it is

Mineral makeup, a term coined in the late '70s by entrepreneur Diana Ranger for the U.S. makeup line Bare Escentuals, refers to makeup made from—what else?—minerals. Because minerals come from the earth, mineral makeup is said to be not only more natural but also safer than traditional makeup.

Mineral makeup is supposed to be free of talc, oils, alcohols, fragrances, dyes, binders, fillers, and other preservatives, all known potential skin irritants that are found in traditional makeup.

What's inside

What goes into mineral makeup? Essentially, mineral makeup is based on hypoallergenic loose powder made from these mineral ingredients:

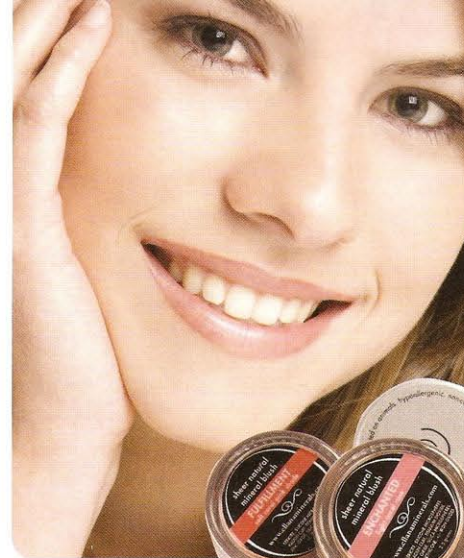
- **Mica** – Has oil-absorbing properties, an alternative to talc
- **Zinc oxide** – Offers natural UVA and UVB protection
- **Titanium dioxide** – Has sunscreen and anti-inflammatory properties that can soothe certain skin problems like acne and rosacea
- **Iron oxide** – Provides color

Experts say that traditional makeup also contains these ingredients; what mineral makeup does not have are the chemical irritants like perfumes and dyes in traditional products.

Women passionate about makeup often pay a price for beauty. After a day of wearing make up, their skin may rebel with breakouts, rashes, and acne the next day. "Like many women, I often ended up with skin rashes, breakouts, and eyesores the next day," recalls Coney Avellana, a makeup hobbyist and entrepreneur.

In 2004, Avellana heard about the trend toward mineral makeup in the U.S. cosmetics market. She tried the products and realized that she didn't get breakouts after using them. "I experienced only one setback: My face felt itchy when I sweated," she says.

But her interest in mineral cosmetics never wavered. Although her academic background is engineering, she researched heavily about mineral makeup. So in 2004, while working in a food and beverage equipment company here in the Philippines, she decided to put up her own mineral makeup line—Ellana Minerals. Unlike other mineral makeup, Avellana says her products are free from the ingredient bismuth oxychloride, which she found out was the culprit behind the itchiness.



Blushes are available in different shades to complement different skin tones.

What the benefits are

Dermatologists say that mineral makeup can be used for sensitive and acne- or rosacea-prone skin since irritants are not part of the makeup's formulation. It is also noncomedogenic, so it won't clog pores and trigger acne flare-ups as easily as the talc and cornstarch in traditional makeup do.

"Mineral makeup is talc-free and there are no ingredients that can harness bacterial growth. It also doesn't have water, so there's no moisture content that allows the bacteria to grow," explains Avellana.

Other benefits of mineral makeup include:

No shelf life. "As long as you don't use a wet applicator [to apply the makeup], it will last forever. It is timeless," claims Avellana.

Long-lasting coverage. "If you use a dry applicator, the mineral makeup can stay on your skin for six to eight hours."

Light texture. Unlike traditional makeup that feels and looks like a heavy mask, mineral makeup is breathable. "It's really light; it doesn't cake and smear," says Avellana. In fact, mineral makeup in loose-powder form is so light you can keep on applying it until you get the right coverage—and you still won't look like a geisha.

Natural effect. "It's not only gentle on skin, the look [that can be achieved] is very natural," says professional makeup artist Barbi Chan.

Buyers beware

Benefits aside, here are a few caveats to remember.

● **Some mineral products contain bismuth oxychloride.** This ingredient isn't pure mineral but a byproduct of lead refinement. Some producers use this as a binding agent to give mineral makeup staying power and shimmer. Avellana says this ingredient in mineral makeup causes her face to itch when she sweats. "It's not appropriate in tropical climates," she says.

● **What if you are allergic to mica?** If you feel burning, itching, or a stinging sensation on your face right after applying a product, your sensitive skin may be allergic to mica or sericite. Consult your dermatologist. It's best to stop using the product and look for mica-free versions instead.

● **What about pressed minerals?** This is the compact type preferred by some consumers who find loose mineral makeup messy. It's the equivalent of the cake foundation and pressed powder in traditional makeup.

"I've been steering away from pressed mineral powders ... because pressing them would mean binders and binders mean chemicals," one makeup aficionado writes in *themineralmakeup.com*.

● **Don't sleep with makeup on.** A mineral makeup pioneer advertises on a late-night infomercial in the U.S. that women can sleep with mineral makeup on. Dermatologists disagree: It's never a good idea to sleep without washing your face, whatever makeup you use, as dirt may have collected on your makeup during the day.

● **Examine any all-natural claims.** As yet no regulatory board has set down standards for manufacturers' claims that their products are all-natural or all-mineral. To be sure, read product labels. Theresa Carbonel, who formulates the makeup mixes at Ellana, advises staying away from products with parabens and formaldehyde. **HT**



The lip gloss line

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