

The Fundamental Basics of Cosmetic Tattoos and Permanent Makeup Pigments

By Dawn Willard

Permanent makeup (cosmetic tattoos) is often misunderstood by the general public. Many people believe permanent makeup is like getting a regular tattoo. There are similarities, but also important differences. Always consult a trained practitioner who communicates honestly about the risks and listens. Below is some information to help you to make an educated decision.

What is permanent makeup?

Permanent makeup is the placement of a pigment (solid particles of color) below the skin to create the impression of cosmetics. The pigment is placed in the skin with a needle.

Why are cosmetic tattoos different?

Essentially permanent makeup is a tattoo, but has a different goal than traditional tattooing. Permanent makeup artist Liza Sims Lawrence, founder of Wake Up With Makeup, LLC in Anchorage explains, "the goal is to be subtle rather than to draw attention." The artist strives to harmonize with the facial features and skin tones.

What are pigments?

According to the article "From the Dirt to the Skin-A Study of Pigments" by Elizabeth Finch-Howell "The Dry Color Manufacturers Association (DCMA) defines a pigment as a colored, black, white, or fluorescent particulate organic or inorganic solid, which is usually insoluble in, and essentially physically and chemically unaffected by, the vehicle or substrate into which it is incorporated." The vehicle, which can be distilled water or other appropriate liquids combined with an antibacterial ingredient such as ethol alcohol, must keep the pigment evenly distributed throughout the mixture.

What ingredients are in pigments?

Permanent makeup pigments always contain basic ingredients used by all manufacturers. A small number of pigments are created with iron oxides. According to Elizabeth Finch-Howell "iron is the most stable of all the elements and inorganic iron oxide pigments are non-toxic, stable, lightfast and have a range of colors." Lightfast means the pigments retain their original hue over time. The difference in pigments is generally associated with the vehicle, or liquid, used to place the pigment under the skin. "I use distilled water and ethol alcohol," states Finch-Howell, "I do not use glycerin as some other manufacturers do because it doesn't evaporate." "Glycerin is a humectant with an extremely large molecule," continues Finch-Howell, "this molecule

is literally punched into the skin." Glycerin is also found in a variety of quality grades. Other permanent makeup practitioners prefer pigments with glycerin because they glide on the skin and do not dry out in the cup. Pigments do not contain mercury, talc or carbon.

What regulations apply to the permanent makeup field?

The Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act does not regulate pigments. However the FDA requires all color additives to be screened and approved by the US Food and Drug Administration prior to being sold. Elizabeth Finch-Howell states, "There is a list of FDA approved color additives for food, drugs, and cosmetics [that] pigment vendors should be drawing from to formulate their pigments". "All organic colorants are subject to batch certification by the Color Certification Branch of the FDA," Finch-Howell continues, "of the approximately 90 pigments on the FDA approved color additive list, all inorganic colorants listed are exempt from certification."

Do allergic reactions or side effects occur?

I have never had a client suffer allergic reactions to permanent makeup. According to Liza Sims Lawrence, authorized distributor of LI Pigments, "photo sensitivity reactions (sunlight) may sometimes be revealed by slight itching and raised, but this is normally associated with reds and violets used in body art tattooing." Sims Lawrence continues, "Once the area is no longer exposed to intense sunlight, the itching and raising usually dissipates. In permanent cosmetics we do not often use body art reds and violets on the face. True allergic reactions are extremely rare." Permanent makeup has been known to cause itching and burning during an MRI. However, the FDA states, "This seems to occur only rarely and apparently without lasting effects." It is best to inform the doctor and MRI technician that you have permanent makeup

What is the difference between organic and inorganic pigments?

Organic pigments are made from plant matter and inorganic pigments are made from dirt, as are topical cosmetics. In permanent makeup, organic and inorganic pigments both play important roles; pigments are not labeled organic in the same way food is by the government. Organic based pigments are necessary for vibrancy of color. Inorganic pigments give us earth tones and are lightfast. According to Elizabeth Finch-Howell, her pigment company, Derma International, uses inorganic and organic pigments and has been operating for 17 years without a single allergic reaction ever reported.

Permanent makeup is an amazing opportunity for men and women to make their lives easier and to love the way they look every day, but there are many misconceptions. Talk to a professional, ask questions and review references. To learn more about the health advantages of permanent makeup and specifics on lip, brows and eyeliner procedures visit <http://www.DawnColors.com>.

Dawn Willard has been in the fine arts field for over 23 years. She currently owns the Permanent Makeup Studio in Asheville, NC. Ms. Willard accepts clients from many

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