

INGREDIENT INFORMATION: MINERAL OIL

You may receive questions from customers about mineral oil and its use in Mary Kay products. We find that many questions result from promotional material published by companies which try to portray their products as “natural,” “herbal” or “botanical.” Such companies irresponsibly attempt to create doubt about widely accepted cosmetic ingredients that have a long established record of safety and performance. The following facts are designed to assist you in answering such questions...

WHAT IS MINERAL OIL?

The mineral oil used in foods, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics is a colorless, odorless, tasteless oil that has excellent emollient, lubrication and solvent properties and a long shelf-life. Cosmetic-grade, pharmaceutical-grade, and food-grade mineral oils are highly purified and refined, and meet exacting standards and specifications for composition and purity. All mineral oils originate from fractions of petroleum, but those used in cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and foods undergo numerous purifying and refining processes.

WHICH IS BETTER, MINERAL OIL OR VEGETABLE OIL?

As usual, which is better depends on the intended use. All oils have varying degrees of emollient and lubricating properties and can be used as solvents for other beneficial ingredients in particular products. Because some vegetable oils can spoil or become rancid when exposed to air, antioxidants and preservatives must be added to products containing these oils so these products have an adequate shelf-life. Since mineral oil does not have these shelf-life problems, formulators often combine vegetable and mineral oil in the same product to obtain “the best of both worlds.”

WHY IS MINERAL OIL USED IN COSMETIC PRODUCTS? IS IT A “FILLER” AS SOME COMPETITORS CLAIM?

Mineral oil is used as an emollient, lubricant and solvent for other ingredients. Because it assists the skin in retaining moisture, it is often used in moisturizers, skin supplements and foundation makeups, particularly in products formulated for dry or normal skin. Because of mineral oil's excellent solvent properties, it is often used in cleansers intended to remove oil based makeup, including eye makeup removers. Mineral oil is often or frequently selected as a cosmetic ingredient to obtain the benefits of these very valuable qualities. (See your Consumer Guide to Cosmetic ingredients for further information.)

WHAT IS THE SAFETY OF MINERAL OIL?

Mineral oils that qualify as cosmetic-grade, pharmaceutical-grade and food-grade have excellent records of safety. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) allows mineral oil to be used in ingestible products such as confectionery, diet salad dressings and laxatives. Many dermatologist and researchers use mineral oil as a vehicle when performing patch tests on other materials, because mineral oil virtually never causes allergic reactions.

Numerous articles in medical literature demonstrate that cosmetic-grade mineral oil is non-comedogenic, meaning that it does not cause whiteheads, blackheads and other blemishes. In addition, Mary Kay products are tested and proven to be non-comedogenic, including those that contain mineral oil. Because most acne-prone individuals also tend to have oily skin, Mary Kay and most dermatologists recommend oil-free skin care products from a preference standpoint.

MINERAL OIL REMAINS A SAFE AND HIGHLY USEFUL INGREDIENT FOR THE COSMETICS INDUSTRY.