

## Your makeup and sponge applicator may be teeming with dangerous bacteria and fungus

Julia Nafutulin Dec 4, 2019, 9:06 AM



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- **If you don't clean your makeup brushes and sponges often, you're likely putting your skin in contact with potentially deadly bacteria and fungus, according to a recent study.**
- Researchers looked at lip glosses, eyeliners, beauty sponges, and other cosmetics and found 70% to 90% of these products had been contaminated with bacteria, including *E. coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus*, as well as fungus.
- **They also found that beauty sponges, which are often used to apply foundation or concealer, were the most fungus-laden products, with 96% of the 79 sponges they studied containing fungus.**
- **These contaminated products could cause hard-to-treat skin infections.**

If you don't clean your makeup brushes and sponges often, you're likely putting your skin in contact with potentially deadly bacteria and fungus, according to a recent study.

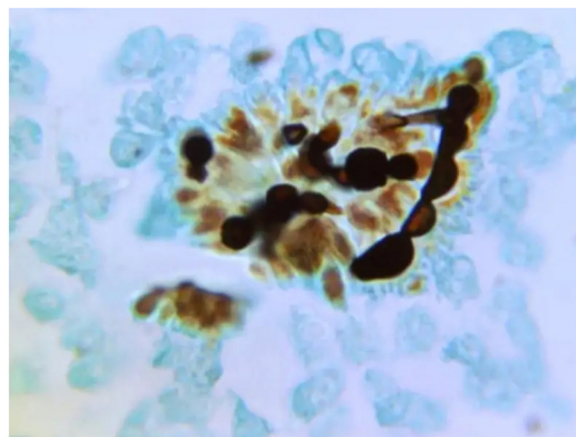
The study, published October 2 in the [Journal of Applied Microbiology](#), looked at how much bacteria and fungus had contaminated 467 popular cosmetics and makeup tools including lipsticks, eyeliners, mascaras, lip glosses, and blender sponges.

Researchers found that 70% to 90% of all of these products had been contaminated with fungus and bacteria, including *E. coli* and *Staphylococcus aureus*. Makeup users in the UK donated the products, the majority of which were reported to be used after their expiration dates.

Even more worrisome, the researchers found that beauty sponges, which are often used to apply foundation or concealer, were the most fungus-laden products, with 96% of the 79 sponges studied containing fungus.

The researchers found the contamination was likely due to people not cleaning products or using expired products, and not the products themselves, that led to bacterial and fungal buildup.

### Using expired makeup could lead to hard-to-treat bacterial and fungal infections



A non-auris form of *Candida* fungus from a liver sample is shown under a microscope. CDC PHIL

According to the researchers, the beauty products were likely uncontaminated when people purchased them. Since many people surveyed used their products past the three- to 12-month expiration dates, however, the anti-bacterial ingredients in the products lost their efficacy and bacteria then formed.

Additionally, people who didn't regularly wash their tools allowed bacteria and fungus to grow on them, the researchers said.

Some 93% of respondents said they never cleaned their sponges, and 64% said they had dropped a sponge on the floor and then used it again without cleaning.

Although the fungus and bacteria on these products don't always cause infections, they can get into open cuts or wounds when someone is applying makeup. This can lead to infections, including ones that are resistant to antibiotics and therefore both difficult to treat and potentially deadly.