

Michelle Tarbox, M.D.

What are some things to consider when buying Halloween makeup?

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If you do have sensitive skin, you want to think about that and make sure you're choosing products that are made for sensitive skin. So things that are fragrance free and free from harsh preservatives. Sometimes this will mean using a theatrical makeup instead of like a Halloween makeup. Because those theatrical makeups are often higher quality and are going to be less likely to be oil or alcohol based, which can really irritate the skin, you want to look for water or liquid based makeups that are intended for sensitive skin use.

Should someone use makeup from last year?

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After you pick a good skin safe makeup, the next most important thing is how you apply it. First step in safe application of any makeup is not letting it get old enough to grow bacteria. So if you had some makeup last year for your costume, and you didn't use all of it, it's been sitting there growing bacteria probably the whole time since last year. And it might actually cause you some significant irritation if you try to reuse it this year. I'm all for recycling, but this is your face we're talking about. So go ahead and treat yourself to a fresh palette of makeup.

Should people share makeup with each other?

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Sometimes people will have kind of a group costume and it's really tempting to all share the same makeup in that setting. If you are going to share a makeup palette, you need to be able to divide it up before you ever put fingers or implements into it that might contaminate it with bacteria. So if you do decide to buy something together, you can actually take small amounts of it with a clean q tip or a little kind of spatula and put it on a paper plate or a plastic plate and use only that makeup for one person. You really don't want to have multiple people using the same makeup palette, or using the same brushes or sponges to apply the makeup because you can accidentally share things like bacteria, viruses or fungi. And that's not how you want to celebrate the rest of Halloween.

What should people consider when wearing items on their scalp?

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A lot of people will want to top their costume off with a wig or hairpiece, you have to be careful in picking it make sure that if you're going to a costume shop or something, you get a wig that sealed off in the package. Because sometimes people have hitchhikers on their scalp and you don't want to pick those up from a hastily selected wig. Once you pick your wig, you want to make sure that you adhere it to the scalp either using appropriate skin glues such as a spirit gum, or a appropriate skin adhesive. And for goodness sakes don't use something that's not intended to be used on human skin. So sometimes people will actually use superglue or Krazy Glue. That's a terrible idea, it can actually cause quite a lot of damage when you remove the wig later in the evening.

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What should people consider when wearing masks to protect from COVID-19?

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There are some companies that are making printed face shields that have different kind of character elements on those. And that's an interesting way to kind of add to your costume and stay safe at the same time. There are lots of different companies also making masks that have a lower facial component to it. I've seen ones for like Sally from Nightmare Before Christmas, or Jack Skellington. And that can be a great way to incorporate that kind of element of fun into an element of necessity. An important thing to remember is if you're going to self-decorate a mask that goes over your face, you want to think about what you're going to be breathing through for the evening. So you wouldn't want to use a volatile like, like a permanent marker that something that's maybe going to give you a headache, or possibly cause inhalational irritation or injury. So you want to use something that's like that intended for children's use. So if you're going to color your own, like surgical or paper mask or something like that, you would use maybe like Crayola brand markers or something that's intended for like safe use with children water based pigment that's not going to have that sort of strong chemical smell that might give you irritation in your nose or in your airways. If you are going to wear makeup and a mask, you want to think about the fact that when we put something over makeup that can increase our risk of breaking out. So all those tips we talked about with using a good clean makeup cleaning your face first, using sensitive skin ingredients so you're not causing irritation are doubly important. If for all or part of the night you're going to have a fabric, plastic or paper mask on top of the makeup pushing it into your skin. So if you can, you might just use the mask as the makeup for the lower part of the face. If you're going to be taking it on and putting it off multiple times in the evening. Just try to think about your skin's health and its ability to breathe and using those ingredients that are really hypoallergenic.

What are your thoughts on fake blood?

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Some costumes call for a little gore. And there are a little fake blood capsules do you actually are able to like bite and it gives an effect where it sort of dribbles or whatever and there are also paints, the paints use that kind of same general principles as any other paint. So you want to make sure it's appropriate for sensitive skin that it's a clean and brand new ingredient and then if you'd prefer it to be water or liquid based. Some people like to make their own fake blood. One of the recipes people will use to do that is like corn syrup and food coloring, which is generally pretty safe, it's a little sticky. The problem is that the food coloring can definitely stain your skin. So you might accidentally still be a vampire on November 1, and which you may or may not enjoy.

How can skin tone affect makeup choices?

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Different background skin pigments can take or show the skin paints differently. The more professional theatrical lines actually accommodate for that and have different palettes for different backgrounds, skin types, so that you can adjust the amount of product you use and use less product overall to achieve the desired outcome. But if you're using a relatively generic palette, and your skin is a little bit darker at baseline, you might have to use a background tone to allow the colors to really pop. If you are layering product, it's even more important to have good quality ingredients that are liquid or water based and avoid those oil or alcohol-based pigments.

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Why should you avoid novelty makeup kits?

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Some novelty products kind of escape regulation by the FDA, whereas theatrical makeups, which are available all year round are usually more rigorously monitored. So the ingredients that go into a theatrical makeup are going to be more adherent to safe skin purposes than some things that are made only for once a year use and often are imports that might contain things that might not be the healthiest ingredients for your skin. So if you're able to, I would go ahead and invest in kind of skin makeup that's a little bit safer and better produced. There are some brands that are very safe, that tend to be fragrance free and harsh, preservative free. And I have no relationship to any of these products. But those include Snazaroo. So it's spelled s-n-a-z-a-r-o-o, it's a fun name. So Snazaroo makes some great pigments, they're water based they're, I think actually also cruelty free and fragrance free. There's another line called Blue Squid Pro Palette also great pigments also water based and fragrance free and cruelty free, which I like all of those things. And then Ben Nye is a company that makes professional theater pigments and theater makeups. And those actually have different palettes based off of different backgrounds, skin types, so that you can really get the skin kind of pigments to pop whenever you're trying to achieve that desired look.

Any special considerations for children's makeup?

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The biggest difference between adults and children with their skin and makeup you might use for them is that children's skin may be a little bit more prone to be sensitive. So those really you know sensitive skin products that we talked about that are a little more cautiously produced might be more important for children, whereas adults may be a little bit more likely to have breakouts or hormonal influence. And so really avoiding oil-based pigments can be more important with adults. With children you also want to make sure especially with a younger child that you're cautious about what you put around their mouth because it will end up in their mouth if you're a small child, especially if they're eating and drinking things over the course of the evening. So really being thoughtful about the skin ingredients is a good idea if you're putting makeup on a child's face.

Any tips for makeup removal?

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After the party's over and everyone's gone home and the Halloween candy is safely in the little candy bucket. You do want to make sure you carefully remove any makeup you've worn over the course of the evening because products that are even designed for sensitive skin left on too long can cause irritation. So at the end of the evening, you want to use a gentle skin cleanser. Often one that's used and designed to remove makeup is going to be a little bit more effective. For my sensitive skin patients. I actually really prefer something called micellar water. It's a special formulation of water that actually helps to encapsulate any kind of product that's on the skin and gently remove it without a lot of scrubbing. You don't want to use any kind of harsh scrubs to remove these products because that might actually grind those things into the skin and cause more irritation. So really gentle skin cleansing with a skin appropriate ingredient is a very good idea. Something that gently foams like I like CeraVe foaming facial cleanser. Very inexpensive, good quality product broadly available, really effective at

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removing makeup. It's a great way to take that off and either using a soft clean wash rag or either little cotton pads would be a good way to really make sure you get all of that makeup off of the skin.