

Mineral make-up: how natural is it?

So you think non-conventional cosmetics only come in bland and boring colours? Think again! **Olivia Richardson** looks at the good, the bad but never ugly side of mineral and natural make-up.

Mineral cosmetics are made from natural minerals (fine, miniature rock crystals) taken from the earth.

Various mineral make-up ranges have been around for more than 30 years but are only now just booming around the globe. In fact, natural colour cosmetic sales are actually around \$336 million in the US and are projected to reach \$500 million by 2010. While there are no figures on the Australian market, there's no doubt that we'll follow suit.

Why the sudden boom?

For a start, mineral make-up now comes in bright aquas, pinks, reds, greens and purples, instead of the previously bland beiges and browns.

'Mineral make-up has also gained popularity because, unlike more traditional products, they generally do not contain any type of preservative,' said Miranda Bond, CEO of Inika, an Australian company that prides itself on its colourful, certified-vegan range.

Ingredients to avoid (commonly found in conventional cosmetics):

- Talc
- Mineral oil (e.g. paraffinum liquidum and petrolatum)
- Acrylates
- Hydroxybenzoic acids
- Triethanolamine
- Aluminium chloride
- Parabens
- Kathon CG
- Bismuth oxychloride
- Propylene glycol
- Diazolidinyl urea
- Synthetic colours
- Fragrances

'Generally, mineral cosmetics are a far more natural choice than traditional make-up, and traditionally contain fewer chemicals than regular/traditional make-up. They are fragrance-free, which is an important factor for users with sensitive skin and allergies. Fragrance is a major factor in skin allergies from cosmetics. Many other ingredients found in traditional make-up are also absent from most mineral make-up, such as waxes, talc, oil and dyes, as well as many other harmful chemicals,' she said.

Mineral make-up is non-comedogenic, which means it doesn't clog pores, and it may

actually contain some sun protection (from ingredients such as zinc oxide and titanium dioxide); plus it lasts a long time. Pure minerals naturally don't support bacteria and therefore last a few years before they 'go off'. However, be careful not to get any water into the container, as this can cause water-borne bacteria contamination.

Although all of the above sounds pretty good, Ms Bond advised: 'Consumers should still check the ingredients label of their mineral products to be assured of a completely natural product — as not all mineral brands are created equal.'

Are there any negatives?

Genuinely natural mineral make-up comes in loose powder form, which can take a little getting used to. Eyeshadows can be notoriously messy.

Some scientists are also concerned about the tiny mineral particles in some mineral make-up, which can be absorbed into the body. Micro-sized particles don't penetrate the skin, but nano-scale (extremely small) particles do. The problem with this is that when some non-toxic molecules are reduced to nanoparticles, they

Mineral and natural make-up brands available in Australia

- Inika
- Missence
- Minerelle
- RJ Mineral Cosmetics
- Ere Perez
- Organic wear
- Physicians Formula

