

New research on how makeup applied only to facial features increases perceived skin evenness

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Makeup is a form of body art that has been used for millennia to change facial appearance. Though styles of makeup have varied through time and between cultures, the actual modification of the face tends to be quite similar, with an emphasis on making the skin appear more even and the facial features more prominent. For instance, think Cleopatra eyes or Kylie Jenner lips.

Complexion-oriented makeup products, such as foundation and concealer, are used to make the [skin](#) appear more even. Using two physical measurements of skin evenness, researchers have found that the skin does indeed have greater physical homogeneity with makeup than without makeup.

The same study also reported evidence that [cosmetics](#) influence perceived skin evenness, with the same faces rated by participants as having more even skin when presented wearing makeup compared to when not wearing makeup.

Interestingly, the effect size of the perceptual judgment was larger than the effect sizes of the physical measurements, suggesting that there are factors affecting the perception of skin evenness that are not captured by the physical measurements of isolated skin patches.

Therefore, a new article published in today aimed to explore the possibility that makeup makes facial skin look more even in part by increasing contrast between the skin and adjacent [facial features](#).

To test this hypothesis, the researchers ran two studies in which participants rated how even skin appeared in faces with and without makeup. The first study used digitally-applied makeup and the second study used actual cosmetic products applied by a professional makeup artist. Critically, the faces in the makeup condition had cosmetics applied to the lips, eyes, and eyebrows, but no products applied to the skin. Thus, the skin was physically identical in both conditions, only the facial features differed.

Dr. Carlota Batres, who led the study, commented "Whether makeup was applied digitally as in Study 1 or by a professional makeup artist as in Study 2, we found that participants rated the skin as appearing more even in the condition with makeup applied to the eyebrows, eyes, and lips. These results demonstrate that cosmetics make skin appear more even not only through products like foundation and concealer that are applied directly to the skin, but also through products like lipstick and mascara that are applied to the features."

So why does the skin appear more even when makeup is applied only to the features? The researchers believe the appearance of spots and wrinkles may be suppressed by the increase in facial contrast from cosmetics. This new study demonstrates that [makeup](#) affects skin appearance not only through the application of products to the skin, but also by modifying the visual context of the skin.

The study "Makeup applied to facial features increases perceived skin evenness" was published today in the scientific journal *Vision Research*.

More information: Carlota Batres et al, Makeup applied to facial features increases perceived skin evenness, *Vision Research* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.visres.2022.108144](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.visres.2022.108144)

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