

New Year's Resolution:

Organizing Your Skin Care Products

by: Karen Simpson

Once the last stroke of midnight sounded on December 31, clinking glasses, peals of laughter, and verses of “Auld Lang Syne” ushered in a new year. Many of us start the new year off with a traditional good luck meal of greens, black-eyed peas, ham and cornbread – and then roll up our sleeves to clean up from the holiday season and get organized for the new year ahead. It’s out with the old and in with the new! It’s also a good time to organize skin-care cosmetics and makeup. I am never sure whether it’s the cornbread or the ham that we eat for good health, so I eat them both. I do know, however, that getting rid of dated skin care products and cosmetics is good for your health and can be a healthy tradition.

Twice a year, day-light savings time hits and we get reminded to adjust our clocks and replace the batteries in our smoke detectors. Perhaps it would be a good idea if New Year’s Day became a day that we remember to organize and purge the stockpile of products in our bathroom drawers. It’s really a simple task and can move quickly with just a few guidelines.

For many of us, the bathroom drawer can be a trip down memory lane. There’s the hot pink lipstick that came “free” with the suntan lotion. It was never the right color—too pink! And, the aqua mascara seemed like a good idea when it was purchased last summer, but somehow it never looked quite as good as it did in the store. And there never seemed to be the right outfit to wear with it. Even though it is almost new, it needs to be tossed. There’s also that weird-smelling lotion that we got at the office party and shoved in the back of the drawer with no intention of ever using it. Getting started can be difficult, but once you take

that first step and toss the hot pink lipstick and the weird-smelling lotion, it gets easier. Get in the groove and clear out all the items that you never liked or never used. They won’t be missed.

It may be too late to use them anyway. The shelf life of cosmetics and skin-care lotions and potions is much longer before the item is opened. Once the bottle or product gets opened, the shelf life reduces to roughly six months to a year. You can extend the life of your products by keeping them out of temperature extremes and by using your cosmetic brushes, cosmetic

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spatulas, or sponges instead of your hands and fingers to apply. If you prefer to use your hands to apply your cosmetics or product, make sure they are clean so that you don’t contaminate the product remaining in the container.

Here’s a simple rule. If it smells bad, get rid of it. The moisturizers, lotions and serums can go bad and start to smell sour over time. A good rule of thumb is to toss all of these after they have been opened for six months. Moisturizers and serums are usually sold in amounts that last for three to six months under normal use.

After throwing out what you don’t want, consider the following information on the useful lifespan of the products you do want to keep. Mascara needs to be thrown out after it has

been opened and used for three months—or if you have had any type of eye infection while using it. The closed tube can easily become a breeding ground for bacteria. Eye pencils, like the mascara, can also become contaminated easily. However, if they are sharpened routinely before use, they are usually okay to keep for 12 to 18 months. The same holds true for lip pencils. Since lipsticks and concealers do not contain fluids, they are generally good for a year after being opened, particularly when using brushes to apply them. Eye shadow, loose powders, and pressed powders have a shelf life of 12 to 18 months after being opened. Liquid foundations can last up to a year—if you use a makeup brush to apply them.

This is important—your makeup brushes need to be cleaned regularly and allowed to air dry at least once a month. Baby shampoo is a gentle and effective cleaning agent for the makeup brushes.

Once purged and organized, your makeup and skin care products are ready to go for the new year. Keep the lifespan of these items in mind, and it will help you avoid infections and stay healthy throughout the year. With cosmetics, we need to realize that the “youth in the bottle” won’t last long enough to grow old with us, but left in the bathroom drawer long enough, it could grow mold for us! 🧴

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