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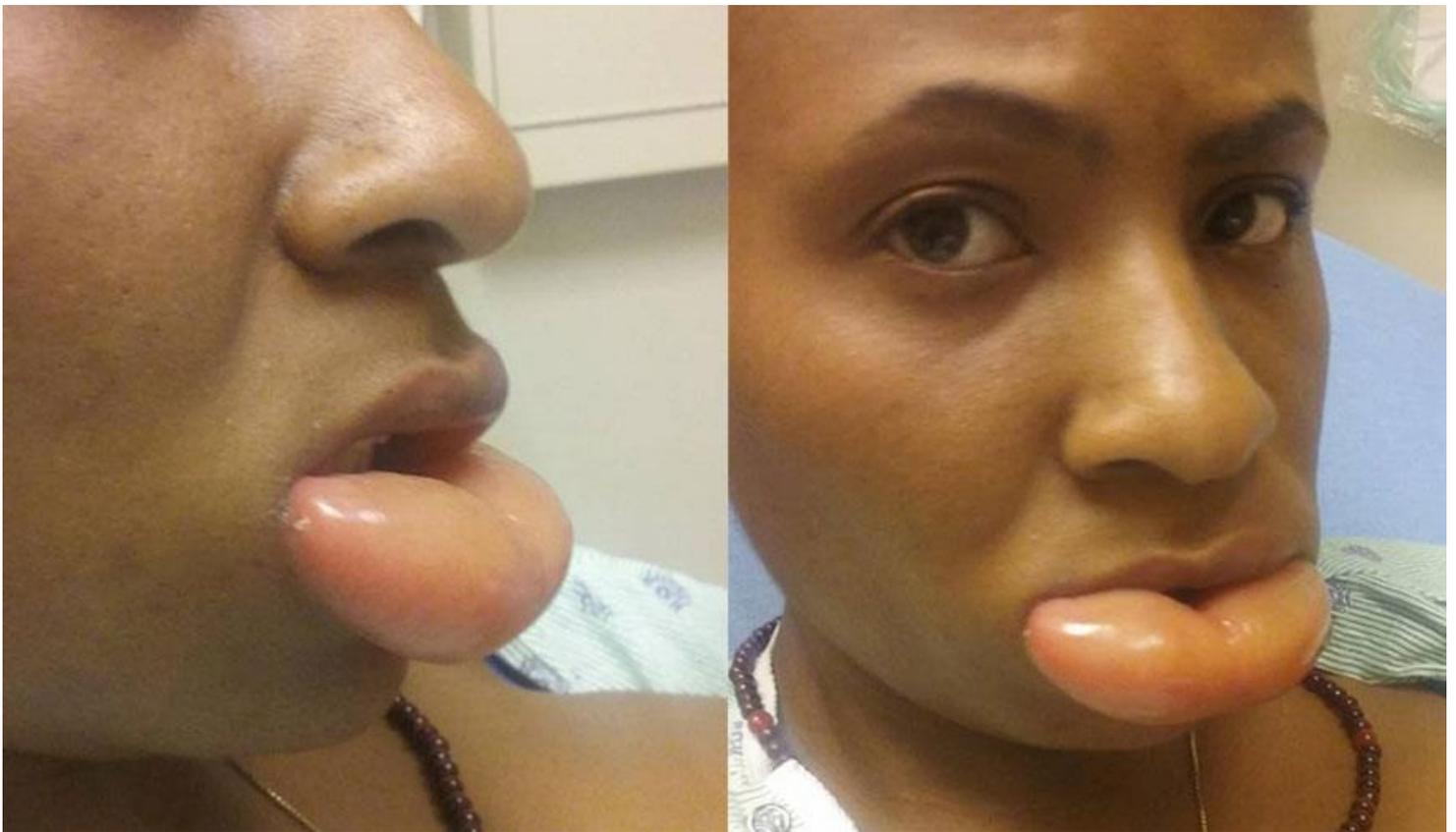
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TRENDING

By Korin Miller

Should You Be Worried About The Ingredients In Your Lipstick?

After trying a new lipstick, this woman rushed to the ER with a massively swollen lip. Derms explain what ingredients in lipstick can cause bad reactions.



A Florida woman is making news after she was rushed to the hospital with a massively swollen lower lip—which she says she got from trying out a new lipstick. Lily Cleopatra Maurice wrote about her experience on Facebook in a post that's been shared more than 58,000 times.

According to Maurice, she used a new lipstick from CoverGirl's Queen collection before going to bed and woke up "choking with huge swollen lips." "I had to be rushed to the ER [and] could've died in my sleep," she wrote, also telling a commenter that her doctor told her the reaction "could've been fatal" if she had been a heavier sleeper.

Can something as seemingly innocent as lipstick cause that much damage? Experts say maybe, but have their doubts that lipstick is actually the culprit.

“Allergies to lipstick usually look like dry, scaly, and some times itchy lips,” Gary Goldenberg, M.D., medical director of the Dermatology Faculty Practice at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, tells SELF. Goldenberg calls that reaction “quite common,” noting that he often sees it in his practice.

New York City dermatologist, Doris Day, M.D., tells SELF that it’s hard to know if Maurice’s swelling was due to an actual allergic reaction (when your body builds up immunity to an ingredient usually seen after repeat exposure) or sensitivity to a particular ingredient. Day says further information is needed before concluding that it was an allergic reaction.

Marie Leger, M.D., Ph.D., an assistant professor of dermatology at NYU, tells SELF that there are a lot of things that can cause rashes and swelling of the lips. She lists oral and topical medications, fungal infections, and random outside irritants as the main reasons they occur. But Leger points to a study published in the journal *Dermatitis* that showed that 38 percent of people who developed rashes on their lips got them from products, including lipsticks and cosmetics, as well as foods, metals, preservatives, and toothpaste.

Day says all the ingredients in the CoverGirl product are pretty standard in lipsticks. She highlights a few that may have caused the swelling, including vitamin A, fragrance (a common allergen in cosmetics), silk powder, and even the colors that go into the lipstick. “My main concern would be with the vitamin A—that could be a little bit of a drying agent to some and could cause swelling, especially if you’re laying down at night,” she says.

However, Day adds, they may have had nothing to do with the swelling. “Anything could have caused the reaction,” she says.

In situations like this, Day says it’s best to get treated for the immediate symptoms and then talk to your doctor about getting a work-up done to determine what really caused the reaction. “It could have been one ingredient in the lipstick or it could have been something she ate,” she says. “You really want to pinpoint the cause and make sure it never happens again.”

Laura Brinker of CoverGirl Communications tells Refinery29, in a statement, “As soon as we learned of this women’s experience, which would certainly not be expected from lipstick use, we reached out to her to learn more about what happened and see how we could help. We are glad to hear she is okay and are awaiting her response. At CoverGirl, the safety of people who use our brand is our top priority. We conduct extensive testing on all of our products to ensure they’re safe and effective.”

If you’re nervous about trying a new lipstick and know you have allergies to some ingredients, Goldenberg recommends doing a patch test on your inner arm first, for up to a week, before applying it to your lips. “If there’s any redness or irritation, don’t use it,” he says.

Leger also recommends being particularly wary of potential allergens in lipstick, such as balsam of Peru, peppermint oil, cinnamaldehyde (a compound that gives cinnamon its flavor), and emollients like lanolin. While not inherently dangerous, these ingredients can cause allergic reactions in some people.

Maurice said in a later Facebook post that she was given steroids and the swelling has gone down slightly.