

# The Best Way to Remove Stubborn Mascara

Having trouble removing mascara? When your mascara just won't budge, turn to this guide to get that black goop safely off in a flash—and, yes, you can say goodbye to those raccoon eyes forever.

By Colleen Sullivan

Most women find the process of taking off mascara incredibly annoying. You rub, you wipe, and the stuff just keeps coming off—it's no surprise some women decide not to remove mascara and go to sleep with their lashes loaded instead. "Mascaras are an emulsion of water, pigments, oils, and waxes, so can be tough to take off," says cosmetic chemist Ron Robinson of BeautyStat.com. But choosing the right cleansers and using the right technique can help with mascara removal. Here, beauty pros weigh in on their top dos and don'ts when it comes to taking off mascara.

## Do: Use a 100 Percent Cotton Pad

"One that's lint-free and resistant to shredding," says New York City dermatologist Joshua Zeichner, MD, director of cosmetic and clinical research, department of dermatology, the Mount Sinai Hospital. "My wife swears by Swisspers, which she buys in bulk at Costco."



## Don't: Use a Cotton Ball

"Any loose fibers can get into your eyes," says Angela Caglia, celebrity facialist and co-founder of Angela Caglia Skincare. Use cotton balls for facial astringents and toners, not for removing mascara.

## Do: Choose a Biphasic Eye Makeup Remover

These formulas are made of two parts—a cleansing oil to remove mascara and other makeup and water to cleanse the skin after the mascara has been removed, notes Zeichner. "They're great because they take off all types of mascara, even waterproof."

## **Don't: Use Alcohol- or Fragrance-based Products**

"They can strip and dry out the skin on the delicate, moisture-challenged eyelids, leading to irritation," says New York City dermatologist and host of DermTV.com, Neal Schultz, MD.

## **Do: Press a Makeup Pad Soaked in Remover Against the Eyes for 30 Seconds**

"It's important for the solvents to dissolve the polymers and pigments and break down the mascara," says Caglia. "This is key to avoiding aggressive rubbing and pulling on your lashes later on."

## **Don't: Rush the Process**

"The more time you allow the mascara to dissolve, the easier it will be to remove in the end," notes New York City dermatologist Dendy Engelman, MD.

## **Do: Remove Eye Makeup by Wiping in the Direction of the Lashes**

"Work from the inside out to minimize the chances of mascara and bacteria getting trapped in the eyes," says Zeichner. Gently grab the lashes with the cotton, and then roll the cotton between your fingers to minimize rubbing, adds Schultz.

## **Don't: Move in a Circular or Horizontal Direction**

"You're just moving the mascara around with this type of wiping," says Zeichner.

## **Do: Remember to Always Use a Gentle Touch**

"The skin here is sensitive and the thinnest on the body," says New York City based dermatologist **Kristina Goldenberg, MD**. "Putting too much pressure on your eyes could also break blood vessels around the delicate eyelid area," adds New Jersey-based dermatologist Jeanine Downie, MD.

## **Don't: Rub Too Hard**

"Doing so can result in a low-grade inflammation that can cause skin irritation, damaged collagen, and promote premature aging of the eyelid skin," notes Zeichner.

## **Do: Keep Your Eyes Closed When Washing Off Your Mascara**

"Some mascara formulas and makeup removers have ingredients which can cause severe irritation if they get into the eyes, and it can take more than 24 hours before that irritation is resolved," says Goldenberg.

## **Don't: Forget to Follow Up With a Gentle Foaming Cleanser**

"If you use a basic oil-based makeup remover, you'll want to get rid of any oily residue on the skin around your eyes," says makeup artist Alison Raffaele Tatem.

## **Do: Use a Makeup Wipe**

Zeichner recommends using a gentle wipe to remove the very last traces of mascara after you've used a cotton pad.

## **Don't: Use a Wipe for the Heavy Lifting.**

But don't skip the above steps when removing mascara. "You'll rub too much and irritate the skin," says Zeichner.

## **Do: Use a Moisturizer When You're Done Cleansing**

"Eye makeup in itself may be irritating, and removing it—even with the best makeup remover—can break down the skin's protective barrier," says Zeichner. "Not addressing the skin after removing mascara could lead to dryness and irritation, so you want to apply a thin layer of cream on the upper lid and under the eyes at night." An eye cream containing retinol for use under the eye will promote new collagen production and help prevent premature fine lines and dark circles under the eyes, notes Goldenberg. If you're very sensitive, a thin layer of cosmetic grade petrolatum ointment—like Aquaphor—can provide a protective coating over the skin, adds Zeichner.

## **Do: Use a Makeup Remover Made Specifically for the Eyes**

"Eye makeup remover is specifically made to dissolve makeup and is created with ingredients which are gentle on the eye area," says Zeichner. "Regular cleansers may contain skin irritants like fragrance."

## **Don't: Substitute Your Eye Makeup Remover for Your Facial Cleanser**

"An eye makeup remover is not a replacement for your cleanser. It's important to wash your face after taking off mascara with a gentle cleanser to clean your pores and remove pollutants," says Goldenberg

## **Do: Report Excess Eyelash Loss to Your Doctor**

"It could be the result of heavy rubbing, but it could also be a sign of an autoimmune disease, like alopecia," notes Zeichner.

## **Don't: Pull Mascara Off With Your Fingers**

"You'll just lose lashes. The touch receptors in your fingertips aren't sensitive enough to feel what's coming off, and you'll end up pulling off eyelashes as well," says Schultz, who notes eyelash regrowth can take up to a year.