

hair gloss

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Hair Gloss

A translucent, deposit-only treatment that adds shine and adjusts tone. Also sold as a glaze, a shine treatment or a clear gloss. It is the most rewarding low-risk service in hair colour, because **most of the effect is optical** and optical effects are immediate, reversible and undamaging.

Where the shine comes from

Shine is a **surface property**. Light striking a hair shaft with a smooth, flat cuticle reflects specularly, producing a defined highlight band; light striking a lifted, chipped cuticle scatters, and hair reads as dull. Nothing about the interior of the shaft changes this.

A gloss works on that surface in two ways:

1. **An acidic pH** — typically 4.5 or below — which **contracts the shaft and flattens the cuticle scales**. This is the same mechanism as an acidic [Hair Rinse](#), and it is where most of the shine comes from.
2. **A film of dye and conditioning agents** that fills surface irregularities, evening the reflection.

A **clear gloss** contains no dye at all and does only the first two jobs. That is a genuine product, not a con — smoothing the cuticle is most of the visible result.

The tinted version

Add direct dyes and the same treatment corrects tone: violet against yellow, blue against orange, green against red, or a warm gold or copper wash to enrich. That is the colour-wheel logic described at [Hair Tint](#) and [Toning Shampoo](#).

Salon glosses may be **demi-permanent** — mixed with a low-volume developer, which makes them oxidative and longer-lasting; see [Demi-Permanent Hair Colour](#). At-home glosses are usually **direct dye only** and last four to six weeks.

What it cannot do

- **Lighten.** Nothing deposit-only can.
- **Cover grey solidly.** It tints grey translucently, which reads as blended rather than covered.
- **Repair damage.** It makes damaged hair look better by smoothing the surface, which is worth having and is not repair.
- **Last.** Four to six weeks for a direct-dye gloss, and less on porous hair.

Where it sits in the rules

Cosmetic — FDA primary category **(07) hair colouring preparations** for a tinted gloss; a clear gloss with no dye is closer to a conditioning treatment under category (06).

The regulatory split matters:

- **Direct-dye glosses** are generally subject to the ordinary **colour additive requirements** — approved for the intended use, certified colours from FDA-certified batches.
- **Demi-permanent glosses containing oxidation dye precursors** fall under the **coal-tar hair dye exemption**, which removes FDA's authority over their safety provided the prescribed caution and patch-test statement appears — and they carry the **PPD sensitisation risk** described at [Permanent Hair Dye](#). A 48-hour patch test applies.

In the EU, hair dye substances are assessed by the SCCS and listed with limits in **Annex III**, with prohibited dyes in Annex II.

Using it

Clean, towel-dried hair — product residue blocks even deposit. Gloves; barrier cream at the hairline. Process for the stated time, checking early and often, because **over-toning is the standard mistake** and a violet gloss left too long on porous blonde hair goes lilac. Rinse in cool water.

Shelf life

Unopened, two to three years. Direct-dye glosses keep 12–24 months once opened if water and gloved hands stay out of the tub. **Demi-permanent glosses must be used immediately once mixed** and the remainder discarded.

Related

- [Hair Colour](#) — the shelf this sits on, and the rest of it.
- [Cosmetics](#) — what the label is legally allowed to say, and the full catalogue.
- The rest of *Colour* — [Permanent Hair Dye](#) · [Demi-Permanent Hair Colour](#) · [Semi-Permanent Hair Colour](#) · [Temporary Hair Colour](#) · [Hair Tint](#) · [Hair Chalk](#) · [Hair Colour Spray](#) · [Root Touch-Up](#).
- Regulatory statements here follow the FDA and EU sources listed on [Cosmetics](#), read 16 August 2026.