

body paint

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Body Paint

Pigment applied over large areas of skin for performance, photography, festivals, sport and art. Body paint is [Face Paint](#) scaled up, and scale changes the risk profile: what is trivial on a cheek becomes significant across a whole body.

The formats

- **Water-activated cakes and liquids** — the professional standard for large areas. Fast, water-removable, breathable.
- **Alcohol-activated** — waterproof and sweat-resistant, used for film and special effects. Removed with alcohol or a dedicated remover, which is harsh over a whole body.
- **Cream and grease paint** — opaque, blendable, requires powdering, transfers onto everything.
- **Airbrush** — thin, even, fast over large areas; the format of choice for full-body work.
- **Latex and silicone prosthetic materials** — a different category again, with a genuine **natural rubber latex allergy** risk that must be checked before use.

Why area matters

Three things change when the canvas is a whole body rather than a face.

1. **Absorption scales with surface area.** Any ingredient absorbed through skin is absorbed proportionally more when the coverage is total. Even low-level exposures are worth taking seriously at that scale.
2. **Thermoregulation.** The persistent claim that full-body paint causes death by suffocation because "skin breathes" is a **myth** — skin plays no meaningful role in gas exchange. The real risk is **heat**: an occlusive full-body layer impairs sweating and evaporative cooling, and overheating under hot lights or in summer sun is the genuine hazard. Break the coverage, take breaks, drink water, and monitor the person being painted.
3. **Time.** Full-body work takes hours, is worn for hours more, and is removed under time pressure. Duration multiplies every irritation risk.

Doing it safely

- **Cosmetic-grade products only.** Craft, poster, acrylic and industrial paints are not cosmetics and are not safe on skin at any scale.
- **Patch test 24–48 hours ahead**, particularly for a long session.
- **Nothing on broken skin, eczema, sunburn or freshly shaved areas.** Shaving before painting is common and is a reliable route to folliculitis; leave a day between them.
- **Not on mucous membranes.** Keep clear of the eyes, inside the nostrils, the lips and the genital area unless the specific product is approved for it.
- **Set a time limit** and remove thoroughly the same day, with an oil-based cleanser rather than scrubbing.
- **Watch the model, not the clock** — dizziness, nausea, or a flush that will not settle means stop and cool down.

Where it sits in the rules

Cosmetic in the US — FDA primary category (08). The colour additive rule is the binding constraint and it applies at full force: an additive may be used only if FDA has **approved it for that use**, and certified colours must come from **FDA-certified batches**. Fluorescent and neon colours are the recurring problem — several vivid pigments common in art supplies have **no approved cosmetic use in the US**, which is why genuinely legal neon body paints are a short list and imported ones frequently are not compliant.

UV-reactive and blacklight paints are the most common non-compliant category at festivals. Buy from a cosmetic brand that names its colour additives.

In the EU the equivalent constraint is **Annex IV**, the closed positive list of permitted colorants — 153 entries — plus the Annex II prohibited list running to 1,766 substances.

Glitter should be **cosmetic-grade**; craft glitter is cut with edges that scratch the cornea.

Shelf life

Water-activated cakes last **two years or more** unopened and should be replaced yearly once in use, especially if shared. Liquids and creams follow the usual **12 months** after opening. In a professional kit, **decant for each person** and never return a used sponge or brush to the pan — cross-contamination

between models is the realistic infection route here.

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- [Cosmetics](#) — what the label is legally allowed to say, and the full catalogue.
- The rest of *Colour and contour* — [Blush](#) · [Bronzer](#) · [Contour](#) · [Highlighter](#) · [Face Paint](#) · [Leg Makeup](#).
- [Body Glitter](#) · [Glitter Gel](#) — what usually goes on top.
- Regulatory statements here follow the FDA and EU sources listed on [Cosmetics](#), read 16 August 2026.