

eyebrow powder

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Eyebrow Powder

Pressed pigment applied to the brows with an angled brush. Powder is the softest of the three brow formats and the most forgiving — it deposits gradually, blends without effort, and is very difficult to overdo in a way that looks drawn.

What it is and why it behaves differently

Compositionally it is [Eyeshadow](#) in brow shades: talc, mica or sericite as the base, iron oxides for colour, a binder to hold the pan together. What distinguishes it is the **shade tuning** — brow powders are built cooler and more muted than eyeshadows, because warmth is what makes a filled brow look artificial.

The difference from a pencil is where the pigment goes. A pencil deposits **on the skin between the hairs** as a line; powder deposits **on both hair and skin as a diffuse veil**. Diffuse reads as density; a line reads as a drawing. That is why powder is the format recommended for anyone whose filled brows keep looking harsh.

Choosing and using

- **Cool and light.** Taupe, ash brown, soft grey. Too warm is the standard error, and it is more visible in powder than in pencil because powder covers more area.
- **Angled brush, tapped out first.** Powder brow products deposit far more on the first touch than expected.
- **Start at the arch, work outward, and do the inner third last** with whatever is left on the brush. The inner brow should always be the lightest part; a dark, defined inner edge is the single most ageing brow mistake.
- **Follow with a spoolie.**
- **Set with Eyebrow Gel** — powder alone brushes off against a pillow, a scarf or a hand.

Powder holds badly on oily skin and on brows that get touched, which is the argument for a pencil or a tinted gel instead. It also does not work well on genuinely bare skin where no hair remains — with nothing to catch on, it reads as a shadow. For sparse or absent brows, a fine pencil drawing individual strokes is the better tool.

Combining formats

The conventional professional order: **pencil for the sparse gaps, powder to diffuse and unify, gel to set**. Most people need one of the three, not all of them; the stack is a stage and photography technique and it looks like one in daylight.

Where it sits in the rules

Cosmetic in the US — FDA primary category **(03) eye makeup preparations**, because the brow is part of the eye area:

- **Only colour additives approved for eye-area use** may be present, and certified colours must come from **FDA-certified batches**. Iron oxides and permitted inorganics do essentially all the work here.
- The **mercury carve-out** — mercury compounds are prohibited except as an eye-area preservative at **<=65 ppm**, and only where no other safe and effective preservative is available.
- Under MoCRA the **small-business exemption from registration and listing does not apply** to products that regularly contact the mucous membrane of the eye.
- FDA's December 2022 final guidance recommends a maximum of **10 ppm lead** in externally applied cosmetics.

Talc in a brow powder raises the same unresolved question as every cosmetic powder: talc is permitted, asbestos contamination makes a cosmetic adulterated, and MoCRA's directed rulemaking on standardised asbestos testing was proposed in December 2024 and **withdrawn in November 2025**.

Shelf life

18–24 months after opening, as for any pressed powder. The practical limit is the brush, which returns sebum and skin flora to the pan and eventually forms a hard glaze — scrape it off rather than pressing harder. Wash the brush.

Stop using every eye-area product at the first sign of an eye infection, discard what was in use, and see a clinician. Do not share it.

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- [Makeup](#) — 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 *Brows* — [Eyebrow Pencil](#) · [Eyebrow Gel](#).
- [Eyeshadow](#) — the same chemistry, and the same colour-additive constraint.
- Regulatory statements here follow the FDA and EU sources listed on [Cosmetics](#), read 16 August 2026.