

liquid lipstick

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Liquid Lipstick

A liquid applied with a doe-foot wand that dries to a matte, transfer-resistant film. It is not a wetter [Lipstick](#) — it is a **different chemistry** built around volatile solvents and film formers, and everything people like and dislike about it follows from that.

How it works

A conventional lipstick is wax and oil: it stays soft, and it transfers. A liquid lipstick is a **suspension of pigment in a volatile solvent carrying a film-forming polymer**.

1. Applied wet, it spreads easily and evenly.
2. The **volatile solvent** — isododecane, cyclopentasiloxane, or a light alcohol — evaporates within a minute.
3. What remains is a **continuous polymer film** with pigment locked inside it: trimethylsiloxysilicate, polyethylene, acrylates copolymers.

That film is why it does not transfer, does not need blotting, survives a meal, and — because it contains almost no emollient once the solvent has gone — why it is drying.

The trade-off, stated plainly

Gained	Lost
Eight-hour wear, no touch-ups	Comfort
No transfer onto cups, collars, people	Moisture; the film is nearly anhydrous
Intense, opaque colour from one coat	Forgiveness — it sets where it lands
Precision edges	Easy removal; it needs an oil-based remover

There is no formulation that gets both. Every "comfortable matte" adds emollients back, and every emollient added reduces the transfer resistance. Knowing that turns a disappointing purchase into an informed one.

Applying it well

- **Prep matters more than for any other lip product.** Flaking lips must be dealt with first — hydration overnight with a [Lip Mask](#), not a scrub immediately before. The film clings to loose skin and lifts it.
- **Thin coats.** A thick application dries with a soft centre that later cracks. One thin coat, dry fully, second coat only if needed.
- **Do not press the lips together while it sets.** That is what produces the ring of colour and the bare centre.
- **Do not layer over balm.** Oil under a film former defeats it.
- **Remove with oil** — cleansing oil, balm, or a bi-phase remover — soaked and held. Scrubbing a set film off the lips is how the chapping starts.

Where it sits in the rules

Cosmetic in the US — FDA primary category (08), makeup preparations (not eye) — with the strict **lip colour additive** requirements: only additives FDA has approved specifically for use in cosmetic lip products, and certified colours from **FDA-certified batches**. This is the same list that excludes chromium oxide greens and ultramarines from lip use.

Carmine (CI 75470) must be declared by name in the US, and FDA's December 2022 final guidance recommends a maximum of **10 ppm lead** in cosmetic lip products.

In the EU, permitted colorants come from the **Annex IV** closed positive list of 153 entries.

An SPF number would make it an OTC drug; almost none carry one.

Shelf life

Twelve months after opening, and often shorter in practice for a reason particular to the format: the **volatile solvent escapes past the cap**, and the product thickens until it applies unevenly and drags. That is a performance failure rather than a safety one, but it ends the tube.

Store upright with the cap firm. **Do not share it**, and discard any tube used during a cold sore outbreak — a doe-foot wand returning to a reservoir after touching the lips is an efficient way to move herpes simplex around.

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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 *Lips* — [Lipstick](#) · [Lip Gloss](#) · [Lip Liner](#) · [Lip Stain](#) · [Lip Oil](#) · [Lip Plumper](#).
- [Lip Mask](#) — the overnight repair for what this does to lips.
- Regulatory statements here follow the FDA and EU sources listed on [Cosmetics](#), read 16 August 2026.