

FDA labeling rules

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has very strong guidelines when it comes to correctly labeling beauty products. If you're caught without the proper labeling on your products, you could incur a fine, so it's important to know—and follow—the rules.

Here are direct links to the FDA sites so you can make your own interpretations. The following is just a small sample of the FDA's rules and regulations. Read the rulings carefully, and be sure your labels are in complete compliance.

In the United States, new laws are in the works that will tighten regulations and bring the United States more in line with the global regulations. New fees are in the works, too, but if you follow the regulations, you can sell your products in Europe. When and if these new laws pass, you need to be sure you read and understand the changes in labeling requirements. If you're not in the United States, be sure you find the regulations that apply in your country.

FDA Cosmetic Labeling Manuals and Guides

Currently, abiding by the rules for labeling cosmetics isn't as difficult as you might think. In a nutshell, all the ingredients have to be listed by their International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients (INCI) names and in order from the most to the least in amount. For example, lotions and creams usually contain 50 to 75 percent distilled water, so distilled water would be the very first ingredient listed on the label. Anything under 1 percent does not have to be listed on the label.

The following links give you more information:

Summary of Regulatory Requirements for Labeling of Cosmetics Marketed in the United States

fda.gov/Cosmetics/CosmeticLabelingLabelClaims/CosmeticLabelingManual/ucm126438.htm

Labeling Regulations Applicable to Cosmetics

fda.gov/Cosmetics/CosmeticLabelingLabelClaims/CosmeticLabelingManual/ucm126440.htm

Cosmetic Labeling Guide

fda.gov/Cosmetics/CosmeticLabelingLabelClaims/CosmeticLabelingManual/ucm126444.htm

Is It a Cosmetic, a Drug, or Both? (Or Is It Soap?)

fda.gov/Cosmetics/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/ucm074201.htm

Cosmetics Q&A

fda.gov/Cosmetics/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/CosmeticsQA/default.htm

Are All “Personal Care Products” Regulated as Cosmetics?

fda.gov/Cosmetics/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/CosmeticsQA/ucm136560.htm

Other Helpful Information

Gale, Marie. *Soap and Cosmetic Labeling: How to Follow the Rules and Regs, Explained in Plain English, Second Updated Edition*. Broadbent, OR: Cinnabar Press, 2010.