

FACTS & FICTION

ABOUT PERMANENT COSMETICS

Permanent Cosmetics are rapidly growing in popularity around the world. Women everywhere are discovering they have more time and less stress when they do not have to worry about applying makeup daily.

As with any relatively new trend, there can be disagreement on how this process is best described. In the USA it is called permanent cosmetics, permanent makeup, cosmetic tattooing and/or micro-pigmentation. In other parts of the world, it is often called semi-permanent makeup.

Although there is an increasing awareness of the facts about these procedures, myths continue to persist to confuse both the technician and the client.

How permanent are permanent cosmetics?

During the procedure, droplets of pigment are placed into the dermal layer. Anything deposited in the epidermal layer will exfoliate off and disappear. The initial exfoliation starts about three days after the tattooing. Tiny particles of normally shedding skin flake off carrying with it the color that was staining these surface layers. Depending on many factors, (including age of the client, their health, their skin condition, their lifestyle and home care during the healing process) it may take three to six weeks for the finished result to be “settled in”.

As long-term technicians and tattoo artists know, the degree of color permanency varies with each individual. Color can fade due to many factors, including prolonged exposure to the sun or other forms of UVA, a person’s own body chemistry, and the degree of care taken to maintain the work. Any process involving the dermal layer of the skin, such as peels, medical procedures, or certain medications such as Acutane, can also adversely affect color integrity.

However, the lifetime integrity of color has nothing to do with the permanent nature of any form of tattooing. The color is injected in molecules and those molecules remain in the skin forever. Even after removal of color via laser, the pigment molecules remain in the skin. The color has merely been bleached from them. This is the same thing that happens, to a much lesser degree, from exposure to any form of UVA.

If the permanent cosmetics could be totally protected from UV, it would remain in its pristine shape for years and years. But, unlike a body tattoo that is protected by clothing, tattoos on the face are constantly exposed. In general, the lighter the color implanted, the more it has the potential to be affected by ultra-violet rays. Just as with hair color, the lighter the color in the hair, the more it will fade or bleach out with exposure to sunlight or other forms of UV.

How fast this process occurs depends on the client’s individual body chemistry and lifestyle.

Dark browns fade to lighter shades of brown; blacks “gray” down. All colors then will show the undertones from which they are made (gray brown, reddish brown, golden brown, violet brown). When the client goes in for a color re-enhancement in 1-10 years, the technician has to compensate for this fade, which makes the color re-enhancement more complex than doing the original procedure.

Because of the lasting presence of pigment molecules in the skin, there has been recent legislation on state and county levels throughout the USA requiring clients are informed that tattooing in any form is permanent in nature. While technicians in many countries consider permanent cosmetics to be semi-permanent, due to the potential of fading, this is not accurate.