

The Big Breakthroughs

With beauty products, necessity may not be the mother of invention, but desire surely is. These innovations improve skin, hair, and more—in ingenious ways. **By Brooke Le Poer Trench**

BEST OF BEAUTY

A makeup artist was in the middle of working on *The Lord of the Rings* in 2000 when she received a very specific request. A young woman with a condition that deprived her of oxygen, making her face blue, wanted to go to her prom with normal-looking skin. Linda Lowndes was an accomplished movie makeup artist—with a keen interest in helping people with unusual skin conditions—so she wanted to find a solution. Applying thick layers of foundation to disguise the condition didn't work. It not only looked like a mask, but as the girl's skin changed temperature, the camouflage failed. So Lowndes set out to create a thin, waterproof, flexible base that looked like natural skin. She sold her house to raise funds and began studying cosmetic chemistry: brainstorming with scientists, solving complex mathematical equations, and mixing formulas. After

years of research on her own, she teamed up with doctors as well as burn victims and women with birthmarks to test various solutions. At last, she arrived at Microskin simulated second skin, a computerized system that scans the good skin as well as the affected areas and develops a liquid that matches the skin. It is then sponged or sprayed on in a fine mist that corrects the color of vitiligo, birthmarks, and burns—and lasts for days. It's a life-changing innovation for people living with these conditions.

There are other researchers who, like Lowndes, combined inspiration with perspiration. At one cosmetics company, scientists focused on a natural repair process in the body and, after eight years of study, found an ingredient that could kick-start it in the skin, thereby fighting wrinkles. Meanwhile, hair researchers scrapped 100 years of accepted chemistry to develop a dye that causes less hair damage than traditional methods. It seems that all great inventions take a certain amount of genius—even beauty products that promise better hair, clear skin, or a more uniform complexion.

Microskin simulated second skin



Most women count cover-up as the essential product in their makeup bags. For women who have large birthmarks, vitiligo, or severe rosacea, a good concealer is truly life-changing—and maddeningly hard to find. The only options are thick foundations that look heavy and masklike, feel like paint, and rub off easily. Microskin dries into a flexible film and doesn't budge for several days—even if you swim, sweat, or apply (and then remove) other makeup.

HOW IT WORKS: A trained technician goes over the skin with a small scanner and mixes a shade to mimic it. The product is then sprayed or sponged on—and this is the magic: Once it hits the skin, the alcohol in it evaporates and microscopic pigments float to the surface,

producing a film of coverage that lasts two or three days on the face, and up to a week on other parts of the body. The process (which includes the equipment needed to apply the color at home and a six-month supply) costs \$750 to \$3,500, depending on the size of the affected area.

WHAT AN EXPERT SAYS: "For people with a port-wine stain or vitiligo, Microskin is a huge breakthrough," says Hirsch. "Their quality of life could be improved greatly. While opaque foundations offer coverage, the longevity of this formula in particular differentiates it."