

CosmetiChroma Insights LIVE

Questions & Answers Session 30th April 2026

hosted by Karen LV MANN PhD

Question 1

"I am a professional face painter (and PhD chemist), and I have noticed that some face paints list "fluorescent brighteners" in the ingredients. These don't appear in the FDA list of approved cosmetic pigments, so how are they classified? And what are the regulations around using them in cosmetics? Does placement on the face matter (ie mucus membrane)?"

Answer 1

◆ Colour Additives or UV Reactive Dyes

Color additives used in cosmetics must be specifically listed and approved in **21 CFR Parts 73 or 74** for cosmetic use.

When it comes to face paints, some UV reactive dyes are allowed – in other words these pigments glow under UV light by absorbing UV light and re-emitting the light as a specific colour, making it more intense than before.

◆ Fluorescent brighteners Optical (fluorescent) Brighteners

Optical (fluorescent) brighteners are NOT dyes; they absorb UV light and re-emit it as blue light to make surfaces look whiter or brighter and these are NOT allowed by FDA.

So fluorescent brighteners are essentially "color additives" in cosmetics ("imparting colour" includes optical effects) – just NOT approved ones.

◆ Scope and Application of Face Paint

Face paint is:

- Applied over large skin areas
- Often used on children
- Sometimes used near eyes and mouth

FDA treats these as higher-risk cosmetic uses.

◆ What is allowed (FDA-compliant options)

For bright, white, or special-effect face paint, FDA allows only approved cosmetic colour additives, such as:

✅ **FDA-approved whites**

- Titanium Dioxide (21 CFR §73.575)
- Zinc Oxide (with restrictions, depending on form and use)

✅ **FDA-approved fluorescent / UV-reactive dyes**

- Certain FD&C or D&C dyes approved for cosmetic use that also fluoresce under UV light - these glow under UV lights and are actual pigments/colourants that emit visible colour.
- These must be:
 - Listed for cosmetic use
 - Used within permitted concentration limits
 - Properly labelled

The FD&C or D&C dyes which to look for in face painting are:

- FD&C Blue No.1 (Brilliant Blue) – CI42090
- FD&C Yellow No5 (Tartrazine) – CI19140
- FD&C Red No40 (Allura Red) – CI16035

👉 Many professional face-paint brands use FDA-approved dyes that glow under UV light *i.e.*, *UV reactive dyes* but NOT those that are considered as an optical brightener.