November 8, 2026

CENTRAL DRUGS STANDARD CONTROL ORGANIZATION

Cosmetics registration in India: importing under COS-1 and COS-2

Cosmetics registration in India comes first: no cosmetic may be imported unless the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) registers it. The maker, its agent, the importer or an Indian subsidiary files Form COS-1 on SUGAM. CDSCO grants COS-2 or rejects it within six months. COS-2 has no end date while the retention fee is paid before every fifth year.

A COSMETIC IS anything meant to be rubbed, sprayed or otherwise applied to the body, or introduced into it, to clean, beautify, add attractiveness or change appearance (section 3(aaa) of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940). A product given as an injection isn't a cosmetic, CDSCO said in May 2026, and no cosmetic may be used for treatment.

KEY FACTS

LAW

Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

DEVICES

Medical Devices Rules, 2017

COSMETICS

Cosmetics Rules, 2020

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Is your product a cosmetic under Indian law?

A cosmetic is anything meant to be rubbed, sprayed or otherwise applied to the body, or introduced into it, to clean, beautify, add attractiveness or change appearance (section 3(aaa) of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940). A product given as an injection isn't a cosmetic, CDSCO said in May 2026, and no cosmetic may be used for treatment.

A product with a drug claim on its label isn't a cosmetic and can't be registered as one, CDSCO's cosmetics FAQ says (question 54). No cosmetic may claim anything false or misleading (rule 36 of the Cosmetics Rules, 2020).

CDSCO set out the injection point in a public notice of May 18, 2026 (our insight on injectables). How CDSCO tells drugs, devices and cosmetics apart is in our guide to CDSCO.

Who can apply for cosmetics registration in India?

Four kinds of applicant may file Form COS-1: the foreign maker itself, its authorized agent in India, the importer, or an Indian subsidiary the maker authorizes (rule 12(2) of the Cosmetics Rules, 2020). So a foreign brand with no Indian company may apply in its own name. CDSCO's cosmetics FAQ says the same (question 6).

The maker's authorization of its agent must be authenticated before a first class magistrate in India, before the competent authority in the country of origin, or by an authority the First Schedule names: the Indian embassy in that country, or an apostille (rule 12(3)). One application and one COS-2 can cover several cosmetics from the same maker, made at one factory or at units working as one (rule 13(4)).

How the agent works for devices, drugs and cosmetics is in our guide to the Indian authorized agent.

How does COS-1 registration work, step by step?

Form COS-1 goes in on SUGAM with the documents in Part I of the Second Schedule and the fee receipt (rule 12). CDSCO examines the file and grants a COS-2 certificate, or rejects it with written reasons, within six months of the application (rule 13(1)). You may appeal a rejection to the central government within 45 days.

1. Check the product

Confirm it's a cosmetic, meets its standard, and holds no novel ingredient that needs COS-3 first (rules 13(3) and 39).

2. File Form COS-1 on SUGAM

Attach the Part I documents and the fee receipt. Fees run per category, site and variant (rule 12(5) and (6)).

3. Answer CDSCO's questions

Reply to each one. Since January 2026, long-pending files left unanswered are rejected after three reminders.

4. Receive COS-2 or a rejection

Within six months, with reasons in writing for a rejection (rule 13(1)). Appeal within 45 days (rule 13(2)).

Six months is the rule; 90 days is a target

CDSCO's cosmetics FAQ cites a 2014 target of 90 days for processing (question 25). The binding limit is rule 13(1)'s six months. Neither tells you when your own certificate will arrive.

What is a new cosmetic, and when do you need COS-3?

A new cosmetic is one with a novel ingredient never used anywhere in the world, or not recognized for cosmetic use in any national or international literature (rule 3(r)). Before registering it for import, you apply on Form COS-12 with safety and effectiveness data, and CDSCO grants prior permission in Form COS-3 (rules 13(3) and 32).

The COS-3 permission goes in with the COS-1 application. Safety tests follow IS 4011:2018, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) methods for safety evaluation of cosmetics (rule 32(4)).

How long is a COS-2 registration certificate valid?

A COS-2 certificate stays valid in perpetuity, unless suspended or canceled, while you pay the retention fee before each five-year period ends (rule 14(1)). Miss the date and you have 180 days to pay it with a late fee. After that, the certificate is deemed canceled (rule 14(2)). CDSCO's FAQ says the same (question 26).

Not Form 42 or 43, and no fixed end date

Some pages still say a cosmetics registration lasts three or five years, or is issued on Forms 42 and 43. Forms 42 and 43 left the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 when the Cosmetics Rules, 2020 took effect on December 15, 2020. The COS-2 certificates listed in CDSCO's 2026 orders show a date five years after issue. Rule 14(1) keeps a certificate in force past that date only if the retention fee is paid before it.

Can another company import your registered cosmetics?

Yes. Once a cosmetic is registered, any person or entity may import it by applying on Form COS-4 with the undertaking in the Sixth Schedule. CDSCO grants an import registration number in Form COS-4A, or rejects the application, within six months. The number lasts three years unless suspended or canceled (rule 17).

The undertaking names the supplier and the maker, and commits the importer to keep distribution records and to recall on CDSCO's direction. It doesn't ask for the registration holder's consent.

COS-4A holders must send CDSCO a yearly statement of what they imported: consignments, bills of entry, quantities, value and warehouses (CDSCO circular of February 23, 2024).

What must the label and the product meet?

An imported cosmetic must carry its registration certificate number and the importer's name and address on the label, and a use-before date more than six months after import. It must meet its BIS standard, or its country of origin's where none applies. No cosmetic tested on animals after November 12, 2014 may be imported.

Label and product rules for imported cosmetics

Requirement	What the rule says	Source
Registration number and importer	The number, after "RC", "RC No" or "Reg. Cert. No", and the importer's name and address on the unit pack	Rule 34(5) and (9)
India-specific labels	May be stickered on the unit pack at bonded warehouses	Rule 34(9), proviso
Shelf life at import	A use-before date later than six months from the date of import	Rule 18(2)
Use before and expiry	Since July 29, 2025, use before means before the first day of the labeled month; expiry means its last day	G.S.R. 513(E), rule 3(w)
Standards	The BIS standard in the Ninth Schedule, or the country of origin's standards for a product not listed	Rule 39(1)

Hair dyes	IS 4707 Parts 1 and 2 and IS 8481, plus the caution label in rule 37	CDSCO circular of June 10, 2026
Animal testing	None after November 12, 2014; the port office asks for the maker's undertaking	Rule 18(4); FAQ question 53

In June 2026, CDSCO told importers and makers of hair color to meet those standards and to report label and formula changes under rule 15(2). The standards themselves are on our BIS pages.

Customs checks CDSCO's checklist for cosmetics before clearance (CBIC Circular No. 40/2026-Customs), and cosmetics enter only through the ports in rule 43A of the Drugs Rules, 1945 (rule 22). Clearance is in our guide to customs in India.

What changes must you report after registration?

Report a change in label, composition, testing or specifications to CDSCO within fifteen days, with an undertaking that the products meet their BIS standards (rule 15(2)). A change of name or address needs prior approval, applied for within sixty days. A change in constitution needs a fresh application within 180 days.

Condition 3 printed in Form COS-2, which CDSCO's 2026 cancellation orders quote, gives thirty days for label and composition changes. Rule 15(2) says fifteen, so plan on fifteen.

After a change in constitution, rule 15(1) keeps the old registration valid until CDSCO grants the fresh one or rejects it. Condition 4 printed in Form COS-2 caps that at 180 days from the change, unless the fresh certificate comes first, so file early.

What happens to unregistered cosmetics sold online?

CDSCO can suspend or cancel a registration after a notice to show cause, with an appeal to the central government within thirty days (rule 16). In 2026 it canceled whole registrations over mismatched labels, unregistered stock and drug claims made online. In July 2026 it told state regulators and its port officers to watch for imported cosmetics sold without one.

In February 2026, CDSCO canceled a holder's COS-2 certificates and COS-4A numbers: labels on the market didn't match the approved ones, and the firm wasn't at its registered address. In August 2026, after a complaint about sales on e-commerce sites, it canceled an importer's registrations for wrong certificate numbers on labels and products stocked without registration. In October 2026, it canceled a COS-2 certificate because the importer's website sold the product as a fat treatment, a drug claim (section 3(aaa) and rule 36).

None of the texts we read covers a brand abroad selling straight to shoppers in India. Read CDSCO's July 22, 2026 circular and our insight on it. New orders appear on our CDSCO tracker.

Who licenses cosmetics made in India?

Each state's drugs controller, not CDSCO, licenses cosmetic factories and enforces the rules on cosmetics sold in that state (rule 4(2) of the Cosmetics Rules, 2020). CDSCO's part is every imported cosmetic and coordination with the states (rule 4(1)). This guide covers the import route only.

What happens if you don't answer CDSCO's questions?

Your application can be rejected. CDSCO's January 16, 2026 notice set three reminders, thirty days apart, for long-pending SUGAM applications waiting on the applicant, cosmetics files pending since 2016 included. A fourth notice rejects the file and forfeits the fee. CDSCO's cosmetics FAQ still says there is no time limit to reply; the 2026 notices are the later word.

The January 16 notice and its May 4 follow-up are covered in our guide to CDSCO applications.

How IndusDesk helps with cosmetics registration

We watch the authorities, tell you what each change means for your products and plans, represent you while a decision is still open, and carry the work through, with every step on record in your workspace.

We check whether each product is a cosmetic and which route it needs, and prepare the COS-1 or COS-4 file for the maker or importer to submit. We check labels against rule 34 and track retention fees and reportable changes. We aren't anyone's authorized agent or importer, and never promise a registration: CDSCO decides.

Regulatory & trade advisory →

Rule exposure audit →

Talk to our desk about cosmetics registration Message us on WhatsApp

Latest notices and insights

- Customs gets CDSCO checklists to verify before clearing drugs, cosmetics and devices (Notice, September 3, 2026)

Frequently asked questions

Do imported cosmetics need CDSCO registration?

Yes. No cosmetic may be imported into India unless CDSCO has registered it (rule 12(1) of the Cosmetics Rules, 2020).

How long does COS-2 take?

Rule 13(1) gives CDSCO six months from the application to grant or reject it. CDSCO's FAQ cites a 90-day processing target from 2014, but the rule sets the limit.

Is COS-2 valid for five years?

No. It stays valid in perpetuity, unless suspended or canceled, while the retention fee is paid before each five-year period ends (rule 14(1)).

Can I sell animal-tested cosmetics in India?

Not imported ones tested on animals after November 12, 2014 (rule 18(4)). Inside India, no person may use an animal to test cosmetics (rule 39(7)).

Can the RC number be stickered after import?

Yes. India-specific labels, such as the registration number and the importer's details, may be stickered on the unit pack at bonded warehouses (rule 34(9), proviso).

Do hair dyes need BIS standards?

Yes. Hair dyes on the Ninth Schedule must meet their BIS standards (rule 39(1)). CDSCO's circular of June 10, 2026 names IS 4707 Parts 1 and 2 and IS 8481.

Sources

- G.S.R. 763(E), the Cosmetics Rules, 2020 (CDSCO copy), December 15, 2020: rules 3(r), 4, 12 to 18, 22, 32, 34, 36, 37 and 39, the First, Second, Sixth and Ninth Schedules, and the

conditions of Form COS-2 (PDF, 773 KB)

- G.S.R. 513(E), Cosmetics (Amendment) Rules, 2025, July 29, 2025: use before and date of expiry, rule 3(w) (PDF, 2.0 MB)
- The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 (CDSCO copy): section 3(aaa) (PDF, 686 KB)
- CDSCO, Frequently Asked Questions on Registration and Import of Cosmetics into India: questions 6, 25, 26, 45, 47, 53 and 54 (PDF, 518 KB)
- COS-12/1/2026-eoffice, CDSCO public notice on the use of cosmetics, May 18, 2026 (PDF, 335 KB)
- COS-11018(11)/5/2024-eoffice, CDSCO circular on the yearly statement of COS-4A imports, February 23, 2024 (PDF, 304 KB)
- COS-13011/4/2026-eoffice, CDSCO circular on hair color products and BIS standards, June 10, 2026 (PDF, 349 KB)
- COS-11018/3/2026-eoffice, CDSCO circular on imported cosmetics sold without a valid registration certificate, July 22, 2026 (PDF, 254 KB)
- IT-11011(11)/1/2026, CDSCO public notice on long-pending SUGAM applications awaiting a reply, January 16, 2026 (PDF, 96 KB)
- IT-11011(11)/16/2026, CDSCO public notice extending the SUGAM reminders to more divisions, May 4, 2026 (PDF, 779 KB)
- Circular No. 40/2026-Customs, checklists for cosmetics, drugs and medical devices before out-of-charge (CBIC), September 3, 2026 (PDF, 3.3 MB)

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