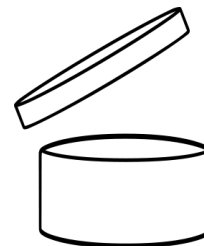


## Period After Opening

The **Period After Opening Symbol** or **PAO symbol** is a graphic [symbol](#) that identifies the useful lifetime of a [cosmetics](#) product after its package has been opened for the first time.

It depicts an open cosmetics pot and is used together with a written number of months or years.

In the [European Union](#), cosmetics products with a shelf-life of at least 30 months are not required to carry a "best used before end of ..." date. Instead, there has to be "an indication of the period of time after opening for which the product can be used without any harm to the consumer". The EU Cosmetics Directive defines in Annex VIIIa the language-neutral open-jar symbol, which manufacturers should use to indicate this period.



### **Practical Implementation of the Cosmetics Directive:**

The Cosmetics Directive states:

A variety of **relevant methods** may be used to support the period indicated on a product, including those used during product development, since there is no officially sanctioned methodology that could be used.

**Examples** of sources of information for assessing a product's PaO may include:

- microbiological challenge tests
- stability data
- experience with similar formulations & products
- analytical data (e.g. preservative analysis)
- type of packaging
- consumer habits and practices.

### **Products that have NOT had prior Stability Testing**

The PAO period (x many months) can be determined by performing a stability study on an opened unit. The testing consists of sample incubation in a controlled environment, with physical, microbial and analytical testing done at specified intervals.

### **Products that have ALREADY had prior Stability Testing**

If all other relevant testing on the sample has been performed, the PAO can be determined by performing a stability study on an opened unit. The testing consists of sample incubation in a controlled environment, with microbial safety substantiated by testing the antimicrobial effectiveness of the preservative system (one time formula test).