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What Really Works For Under-Eye Circles, According To A Doctor



There's no faster way to give off "I'm exhausted" vibes than to walk around with dark circles under your eyes. But treating bags is difficult because there are a whole host of different reasons why people have them. It can be due to a lack of sleep, being overworked, not getting enough water, or they're simply genetic. While the first three causes can be altered, the latter means you will likely always have under-eye circles, like bigger pores. But you can treat them so their appearance diminishes, albeit temporarily.

I'm one of those people who have genetic dark under-eye circles. I have them, my mom has them, my grandma had them, and likely my great-grandmother

rocked them. While they have never made me feel insecure, there are times when I would rather they were lesser in appearance. And because of that — coupled with the fact I have been a beauty writer for nearly a decade — I have tried many products to see if they help.

And here's the thing — most don't. There are so many products out there with false advertising, so it's important to know which ingredients actually help change the skin under your eyes. According to Dr. Michael Horn, a Chicago Illinois Board Certified Plastic Surgeon, these are the main ingredients to look for:

Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10): This ingredient protects the skin from the sun and inhibits wrinkle formation.

Peptides: Excellent for fine lines and skin that is becoming thinner because it supports collagen production.

Ceramides: Improves the skin's moisture and strength.

Niacinamide: An antioxidant that hydrates, brightens, and reduces excess oil.

Hyaluronic acid: Improves the skin's elasticity because it naturally attracts water which moisturizes the skin.

Vitamin C: An antioxidant that provides a brightening agent and sun protection.

Caffeine: Can temporarily decrease under-eye circles and puffiness.

Retinoids: Use this ingredient as a night eye cream. It can irritate the skin when in the sun. After consistent use, it can reduce wrinkles.

Ferulic acid: A great ingredient for the day as it shields the thin skin under the eyes from environmental damage.

SPF: The skin under the eyes is the thinnest skin on the face, so you need to protect with an SPF of at least 30.

"Always avoid any ingredient in an under-eye cream that has ethanol or isopropyl on the label. These are derivatives of ethyl alcohol," says Dr. Horn. "They will do the opposite of what you want — they will dry your skin."

As for which buzzwords to avoid, it's more about managing your expectations of how much a product can do. **"If you have bags under your eyes, especially at an early age, it is likely genetic. No eye cream will permanently reduce them. Those that have caffeine can reduce puffiness but it is only temporary," he explains. "You must be consistent in your use of eye cream and use those with some of the key ingredients listed."**

He also notes that making lifestyle changes will help, such as not smoking, drinking more water, reducing alcohol consumption, and avoiding the sun. "While eye creams can help to fight aging of the eyes to a degree, there is little they can do for dark circles. Many in-office aesthetic procedures can combat dark circles, eye bags, or eye hollowing. Some of these include chemical peels, botox, skin tightening procedures, blepharoplasty, microneedling, and lasers. There is no such thing as 'surgery in a bottle.'"

The following is an honest guide to products that will actually help your under-eyes. And just so you know, Livingly may collect a share of sales from these links.

Skyn Iceland Dissolving Microneedle Eye Patches With Hyaluronic Acid & Peptides

This right here is my Holy Grail under-eye product. I will buy it until the end of time and think it's well worth the monetary investment. Microneedling is everywhere now, and one area that can really benefit from that beauty treatment is your under-eye area. The delicate skin underneath your eyes often experiences wrinkles, discoloration, puffiness, and sagging, and microneedling can help tackle all of those ailments. A safe at-home microneedling eye treatment to try is the skyn Iceland Dissolving Microneedle Eye Patches, which are rich with hyaluronic acid and peptides.

"Combat crepey skin," the product description reads. "This technologically advanced under eye smoothing treatment utilizes hundreds of high-tech micro tips, each one made up of concentrated age-fighting ingredients, to help deliver targeted wrinkle-smoothing ingredients with precision."

NuDerma Skin Wand

This might look like a gimmicky beauty tool, but it really works! It's also one of the best ways to minimize bags and dark circles, albeit temporarily for the day.

"Sagging skin, hair loss, age spots are other skin imperfections are the hallmark signs of decreased cell activity due to aging," the product description reads.

"The NuDerma Skin Wand amplifies cell turnover by supercharging ATP synthesis to slow, halt and ultimately reverse the aging process leading to firmer younger skin."

Not only that, but the high-frequency wand helps your products permeate deeper into your skin. It also helps lighten dark spots, and tackles acne or acne scars. After using it, I always have this filter-like glow and can't recommend it enough. When paired with hyaluronic acid, it helps minimize the severity of your bags.

Alastin Restorative Eye Treatment

Collagen decreases as we age, which is why we look for products that help boost its production. Alastin Skincare Restorative Eye Treatment with TriHex Technology helps support the skin's ability to produce new collagen while reducing the appearance of fine lines, puffiness, and bags under the eyes. Lack of collagen makes your skin thinner, making dark under eyes more visible. This product does so with its combination of hero ingredients like niacinamide, Tetrapeptide-30, and squalane.

One of the best things you can do for your under-eye area is keep it hydrated. This helps with everything from minimizing the appearance of crepiness, lines, and dark circles. The Alastin Restorative Eye Treatment keeps that area moisturized, and the key ingredients help diminish dark circles and wrinkles, providing an overall brightness to the skin around the eyes.

Facial Cupping

If you have hereditary dark circles, facial cupping needs to be part of your daily routine. Like Gua Sha, facial cupping is another beauty trend blowing up in 2022.

It provides the same results as the Gua Sha, but some feel like it's a tad easier to do. It stimulates blood flow, helps sculpt the face, and can help with things like sagging and puffiness.

Part of the reason your under eyes appear so dark is that there is fluid buildup there, creating the dark cast. Help move it along by dragging it away from your under-eye and down to your lymph nodes with the help of a facial cup. This has helped me a lot in lightening the cast considerably, if only temporarily.

Prior to starting the cupping process, you need to moisturize (or put on a face oil if you have one) to help the cup glide. If you're curious about the cupping beauty treatment, follow @stephflockhart on TikTok for tutorials.

Herbal Dynamics Beauty Cucumber Cooling Eye Cream

Fight puffy eyes with Herbal Dynamics Beauty Cucumber Cooling Eye Cream. This hydrating, ultra-refreshing blend of neem, collagen, vitamin A and E, hyaluronic acid, and peptides depuffs tired eyes. These ingredients work together to increase collagen, which thickens the skin and reduces any crepiness, making dark under eyes less visible.

They also hydrate the skin and reduce inflammation over time, strengthening the area and making it harder to see the dark veins underneath. Plus, you can store it in the fridge for an extra cooling boost before applying!

EyeSpnx

The name says it all — it's like Spanx for your eyes. It uses an anti-oxidant cocktail of Vitamins C & E to deliver noticeable results. Vitamin C slows the rate of free radical damage to collagen that can contribute to dry skin and fine lines, and Vitamin E protects and repairs your skin and can help prevent premature aging and DNA damage.

The product also utilizes green tea, which has anti-inflammatory properties that

reduce skin irritation, skin redness, and swelling, as well as hydroxy acids, which remove dead skin cells and improve the appearance of acne scars. And lastly, it has all-important peptides in its formula, which stimulate the skin to increase collagen, leading to firmer, thicker skin.

One Love Organics Vitamin E Eye Balm

One Love Organics Vitamin E Eye Balm features a powerful plant-based blend of Vitamin E, shea butter, pomegranate, and sea kelp to intensely nourish, smooth, and firm the appearance of skin.

The mix of pomegranate, shea butter, and Botanical E deeply moisturizes the skin. The cream has a very thick, luxurious texture, so your under-eyes get instant relief upon contact. And the sea kelp helps to firm the appearance of the skin, aiding in masking the dark under-eye shadows over time.

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