

Top Dermatologists Offer Affordable Ways to Minimize the Appearance of Dark Undereye Circles

Anyone who works a job that has any kind of stress level knows that the constant dark-circles-and-undereye-bag situation is so real. You'll do almost anything save cut off an arm to get rid of them. And even after you've tried a million expensive treatments, they usually come back.

Truth is, your eye puffiness and darkness could be inherited. "The undereye area is one of the thinner areas and is easily neglected in basic skin care," says Paul Jarrod Frank, a cosmetic dermatologist in New York City. "There is a strong genetic component to dark circles, which is out of people's control." Womp womp. Yes, much of the reason you have those circles is because of your parents' own thin skin (thanks, Mom). Sometimes you have them because of an increase in pigment in that area. But don't run to the doctor asking for a pricey laser or needle treatment. Below are ways to minimize the appearance of those circles that won't cost you an arm *or* a leg. These affordable tips go way beyond putting cucumbers on your eyes.

If you have dark circles because of increased pigment, use lightening products and sunscreen. "Sometimes dark circles are caused by increased pigment, either from rubbing or from sun damage," says Nazarian. "The best treatment for this includes topical lightening agents such as vitamin C, kojic acid, and licorice extract. These ingredients help decrease skin pigmentation over time, ultimately resulting in lightening of the dark circles." And you must wear sunscreen. "Invest in a broad-spectrum physical sunscreen that contains zinc oxide or titanium dioxide," Tung says.

Take an antihistamine. "Most people have darkness under the eyes due to allergies and don't realize it. An antihistamine helps clear that up; I like to take a Zyrtec at night," says Kavita Mariwalla, a dermatologist in West Islip, New York.

Also try Preparation H. "Prep H causes blood vessels on muscle walls to constrict. This will give a slightly longer-lasting effect than putting cucumbers on your eyes but may be irritating for some people. I would only use this for special events," says Annie Chiu, a dermatologist in North Redondo Beach, California.

Try tea bags. "Caffeinated tea, which contains natural tannins, is a mild diuretic and long used by grandmothers and runway models for reducing eye puffiness. Soak two tea bags in warm water, then chill the bags for a few minutes in the refrigerator. Place one tea bag on each eye for five minutes, and your eyes will feel fresh and look brighter," says Karen Hammerman, a dermatologist in New York City.

If you have dark circles from thin skin, use a retinoid. "With repeated use, retinol can stimulate production of collagen, making the skin less thin and improving the dark circles. They are easy to find at the drugstore," says Rachel Nazarian, a dermatologist in New York City. "Retinoids help rebuild dermal collagen and thereby contribute to vascular support in the area and the recovery of skin volume and firmness," says Patricia Ceballos, a dermatologist in New Rochelle, New York. One of our favorite drugstore retinols is [← RoC Retinol Correxion Sensitive Eye Cream](#)**Sleep on your back, and use an extra pillow.** "If dark, puffy [bags under your eyes] seem to be the morning problem, consider sleeping on your back with an extra pillow so that fluid doesn't pool overnight. Keeping your pillow protected from allergens (dust and dust mites) with a protective encasement can also help when allergies are the culprit," says Rebecca Tung, a dermatologist in La Grange Park, Illinois.

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Be gentle with your makeup remover. "Consider your under-eyes as sensitive skin even if you may not necessarily have sensitive skin. Undereye skin is among the thinnest on the body, so any trauma or irritation can cause skin inflammation," says Joshua Zeichner, the director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. "If you are using a towelette, try one that is fragrance free, like **Neutrogena Fragrance Free Makeup Remover Cleansing Towelettes**, and take gentle strokes in a single direction rather than rubbing back and forth."

Sleep more. "The cheapest way to reduce the appearance of undereye bags is to get on a regular sleep routine of seven to eight hours per day. And don't drink alcohol a few hours before bedtime," says Chiu.