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BEAUTY WITH BRAINS



Quick cover: To camouflage circles, apply eye cream and let it dry for a few minutes. Then pat on a creamy concealer that matches your skin tone. Top with a layer of loose powder, which helps prevent makeup from caking in creases.

We've all been there: You catch a glimpse of yourself in the mirror and see the eyes of a tired woman staring back at you. But a full night of shut-eye isn't enough to erase those dark circles, says Charlotte Clark, a dermatologist in New York City. It may help diminish their appearance a bit, but to get rid of circles for good, first consider their source.

WHY THEY APPEAR

Genetics are the biggest culprit. If you inherit fair or thin skin under the eyes, it's more obvious when blood pools there (often because of slower circulation from lack of sleep). This accumulation causes fragile capillaries to stretch and leak.

Age is another factor. Over time, skin loses collagen and thins, so veins show through more prominently. Sunbathing speeds up this process by breaking down collagen and mottling skin color.

Seasonal allergies are to blame for many people. "They trigger the release of hista-

mines in the body, which in turn inflame blood vessels and cause swelling," says Ranella Hirsch, a dermatologist in Boston. To determine why your circles happen, gently stretch the skin under your eyes. If that area becomes darker, the circles are probably due to genetics or aging. If the color doesn't change, UV rays or allergies are probably the cause.

HOW TO TREAT THEM

If your circles are the result of vascular issues, double up on pillows at night to stop blood from building up under your eyes. In the morning, apply a cold compress for about five minutes to constrict the blood vessels, says Jeannette Graf, an associate clinical professor of dermatology at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, in New York City. Use an eye cream with caffeine, which helps constrict vessels (try Lancôme Rénergie Microlift R.A.R.E. Intense Repositioning Eye Lifter; \$70, sephora.com). Other smart alternatives: Arnica-based creams (found at

health-food stores), which are considered to have anti-inflammatory properties, may reduce the appearance of darkness. And eye creams with green tea or grapeseed oil help strengthen capillary walls (see below for product suggestions). **Try tweaking your diet, too. Flavonol-rich dark chocolate (an ounce a day) and foods full of omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, walnuts) may improve blood flow to the skin, says Lisa Drayer, a registered dietitian in New York City.**

For allergy-induced circles, consider taking an over-the-counter antihistamine *before* allergies begin to abate shadows.

And, last, if thin skin is the issue, use a collagen-building cream. "One of my top go-to ingredients is retinol," says Hirsch. "It helps increase collagen production." Vitamin C also encourages production and can help brighten skin tone. And wear sunscreen daily, says Hirsch, or you'll cancel out the benefits from any of these treatments.

TARGETED TREATMENTS

Experts suggest looking for ingredients such as green tea (to fortify capillaries, so they don't leak), retinol (to help strengthen undereye skin), and vitamin C (to brighten).



Replenix Intensive Eye Lightening Serum (with green tea), \$63, dermstore.com.



ROC Multi-Correxion Eye Treatment (with retinol), \$25 at drugstores.



Renée Rouleau Vitamin C Eye Serum, \$40.50, reneerouleau.com.



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