

**BEAUTY WITH BRAINS**

# Can I get rid of under-eye circles?

If your dark circles aren't quite this adorable, you don't have to grin and bear it. Turn the page for some (en)lightening strategies.

WRITTEN BY Hannah Morrill PHOTOGRAPH BY Ryan Pfluger



## blue vs. brown

Your plan of attack depends on the color of your circles. Look straight into a mirror in natural light, then lower your chin slightly to expose the shadows under your eyes. This way, you'll see clearly whether your circles are more blue or more brown.

### blue circles

**THE CAUSE:** Blue circles result from oxygenated blood pooled beneath the under-eye skin. Skin here is very thin and almost transparent, so blood shows through. This is more noticeable in the morning: When we've been horizontal for a while, fluids accumulate and the veins expand to hold more blood. Blue circles may get worse with age. "As we get older, we lose subcutaneous fat, which can mask blueness below the surface of the skin," says dermatologist Joshua Zeichner, the director of cosmetic and clinical research at Mount Sinai Medical Center, in New York City.

**OTC TREATMENTS:** There are a few options that work in different ways, though their effects last only a day at most. Topical creams with stimulating ingredients, like caffeine, can constrict blood vessels and temporarily boost circulation; potent hydrators, such as hyaluronic acid, plump the area, pushing the skin up and away from the pooled blood. Retinoic acid creams thicken the outer layer of the skin to conceal shadows. Another quick fix: products with stainless-steel rollerball-tip applicators. "The

cool metal causes vessels to constrict," says New York City dermatologist Eric Schweiger. **PROFESSIONAL TREATMENTS:** A few other treatments approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for use on the rest of the face can effectively treat under-eye circles. One noninvasive solution is a cream with a prescription-strength retinoid. Blue circles can also be significantly diminished by a treatment called Thermage, which involves a high-tech handheld radio-frequency device. It is nonsurgical, requires no downtime, and is thought to increase the production of collagen, which builds up and tightens the skin. One session costs about \$1,000, and the results last three to five years. Zeichner treats dark circles by injecting a hyaluronic acid filler, such as Juvéderm or Restylane, to plump the skin and hide blueness; the injections can last a year or longer and cost \$700 to \$900 a pop.

### brown circles

**THE CAUSE:** Brown circles result from hyperpigmentation, triggered by chronic eye-rubbing, sun exposure, or genetics. They are most prevalent among Asian and African American skin tones. **OTC TREATMENTS:** Your best bet is daily use of a cream or serum spiked with a skin brightener, like soy or citrus, which can lighten circles over a period of four to six weeks.



#### DARK-CIRCLE SALVES

**FOR BLUE CIRCLES:** Philosophy **Miracle Worker Eye Repair** (\$65, philosophy.com) contains a high-performance retinoid. **Lancôme Génifique Eye Light-Pearl** (\$68, lancome-usa.com) comes with a metallic applicator. **La Roche-Posay Hydraphase Intense Eyes** (\$33 at drugstores) uses firming caffeine and moisturizing hyaluronic acid. **FOR BROWN CIRCLES:** Murad **Renewing Eye Cream** (\$73, murad.com) brightens with citrus-unshiu peel.

Avoid hydroquinone, a go-to lightener for sun spots and scars, as most dermatologists agree that it's too heavy-duty for the eye area.

**PROFESSIONAL TREATMENTS:** As with blue circles, there are treatments dermatologists use elsewhere on the face that can also lessen the look of brown circles. They respond well to low-concentration TCA (trichloroacetic acid) peels, which exfoliate. Plan on spending about \$100 a treatment,

and you may need several over a couple of months. For enhanced results, there are lasers, like the Q-switched or Fraxel, which destroy pigment cells and even out skin tone with a beam of light energy. Most circles lighten after two or three \$500 sessions.

## preventive measures

Reason No. 734 to wear sunscreen: It will keep circles from returning after treatment and can also stop them from developing in the first place. Sun protection prevents skin from both thinning prematurely (exposing blueness) and tanning (getting browner).