

Newslinks for the week of June 9th:

The New York Times

SKIN DEEP

Putting 'You Look Tired' to Rest

By [KATIE ZEZIMA](#)

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IRY CHANG is sick of people telling her she looks exhausted. She gets enough sleep, but the dark circles under her eyes still elicit stares and make her look much older than her 25 years.

"Anyone who has dark circles knows how it feels," said Ms. Chang, who started www.mydarkcirclesblog.com, which posts articles and Web links about the latest remedies and clinical treatments for dark circles. "They're quite annoying. When I look in the mirror, all I see is someone who looks very tired."

Ms. Chang has occasionally used concealer on the discoloration. But now that dozens of beauty companies, including Clinique and Shiseido, make potions to treat dark circles and not just mask them, she hopes like so many others to be able to look refreshed without using makeup.

In recent years, the drumbeat against under-eye circles has grown louder.

"Dark circles around the eyes can be unsightly," declares one advertisement for a Medik8 eye cream. An advertisement for Hylexin cream features a pale model with black stripes under her eyes, like a football player, for dramatic effect. And just in case you think you are overreacting, the ad reinforces the notion that dark circles are indeed a flagrant shortcoming.

"It has become one of our top imperatives now to address dark circles," said Tom Mammone, the executive director of research and development for .

Roughly 53 percent of the 13,000 Clinique users surveyed by the company in 2006 cited under-eye circles and puffiness as their No. 1 beauty concern.

“We were really shocked,” said Dr. Mammone, who has a Ph.D in molecular and cellular biology. “We knew many of our people in distribution and sales suggested that it was a concern, but we didn’t really know until the survey that it is a major issue.”

Sephora now sells more than 50 products designed to specifically treat under-eye circles, said Stacy Baker, the chain’s editorial director.

Sales of anti-aging skin care treatments, which include products designed to get rid of dark circles, increased to \$1.08 billion in 2006, up from \$588 million annually in 2001, according to Mintel, a market research firm. No one specifically tracks the market for dark-circle remedies.

Taming dark circles is tricky.

“There are a lot of factors that contribute to quote-unquote dark circles,” said Dr. Diane Berson, an assistant professor of dermatology at the Weill Medical College of Cornell University in Manhattan. “It’s a combination of [heredity](#) and [genetics](#).”

Most people think dark circles are a telltale sign of tiredness, or the unsightly evidence of a binge involving one too many margaritas. That is true to a certain extent, as fatigue makes skin dull, and drinking alcohol dehydrates and thins the skin.

But the most likely culprit causing chronic dark circles, dermatologists say, is excess pigmentation in the skin. Dark circles are prevalent on all skin colors and types, but they especially trouble African-Americans, Southeast Asians and Southern Italians. Beach bunnies should note: sun exposure exacerbates dark circles.

Dilated blood vessels that sit close to the thin under-eye skin are another cause, doctors said. And airborne allergens, which cause blood to pool in the vessels under the skin, can worsen their appearance, said Dr. John A. Persing, a professor and the chief of [plastic surgery](#) at the [Yale University](#) School of Medicine. (Treatment for these sufferers may be as simple as an [antihistamine](#) pill.)

Aging, which causes skin to thin, can darken the eye area, as can certain medications such as [birth control](#) pills, which can dilate blood vessels.

The problem is that few, if any, of the creams on the market are formulated for people with excess pigmentation or dilated veins.

“Multiple creams are available, however it is unclear how effective they are,” Dr. Persing said.

For people who aren't sure why they have dark circles, he recommends topical products that contain a plumping agent or alphas hydroxy acids, which can thicken the skin, or [vitamins](#) C and K, which can inflame skin and add volume.

But considering the glut of products on the market with a variety of active ingredients, Dr. Persing said, “If there are that many of them available, that usually means they're not terribly successful.”

Clinique uses whey protein in its All About Eyes Rich cream (\$27.50), because it increases collagen production, said Dr. Mammone.

But in independent medical research, whey protein has not been proved to plump up skin. (Clinique is also experimenting with various peptides, or linked amino acids, to treat dark circles.)

Shiseido White Lucent Brightening Eye Treatment (\$50) uses [vitamin C](#), which minimizes melanin, and chestnut rose extract, which the company says thickens skin's texture, said Blair Bloom, the company's executive director of education and training.

For more than 12 years, a kind of [laser surgery](#) that resurfaces skin and destroys pigment cells was the only recourse for those bothered by under-eye discoloration. But it was painful and took weeks to heal. Even though newer laser technology tackles less surface at a time, ample recovery time is still needed.

So in the last three years, plumping up the area under the eyes with injections of off-label fillers like Restylane and Juvéderm has become a popular alternative for people who want little downtime.

Plastic surgeons and dermatologists say the fillers help cover up melanin or the blood vessels that peek through thin skin. A round of injections, which lasts about six months, costs \$500 to \$800.

Patients have long complained about dark circles, but aside from surgery, there used to be few options, said Dr. Z. Paul Lorenc, a Manhattan plastic surgeon who participated in clinical trials for the filler Restylane. These days, he estimated that 20 percent of his patients ask about fillers for their dark circles.

Fillers are not risk-free. Side effects can include bruising, [swelling](#) and [allergic reactions](#).

Still, the [Food and Drug Administration](#) received only 45 reports of adverse effects from having fillers injected in the eye area, including nodule formation and bruising, from January 2003 to October 2007, said Peper Long, a spokeswoman.

Neither Restylane and Juvéderm were specifically approved by the F.D.A. to treat under-eye circles, so patients should be cautious, Ms. Long wrote in an e-mail message. (Both were approved to fill facial [wrinkles](#).)

Patients risk bumps and lumps, which may last anywhere from a few weeks to a year, from injections in the under-eye area because the skin is so thin, Dr. Berson and Dr. Persing both said.

“It’s hard to get a smooth contour with injections,” Dr. Persing added.

Although Annette Pucci, 48, of Queens, chalks up her the dark circles under her eyes to genetics, she still tried “every cream in the world,” including eye formulations by Chanel and Lancôme.

“I’d pay a fortune for this stuff and I didn’t really see a difference — ever,” she said. “It was horrible. I always felt like I looked tired all the time or like I was crying.”

After a friend mentioned she was going to use fillers to treat her dark circles, Ms. Pucci also had Restylane injections, in November. “I was a little skeptical,” she said.

But Ms. Pucci said her circles have disappeared, all with little downtime. “I just put on an ice pack and went to my son’s baseball game that night,” said Ms. Pucci, one of Dr. Lorenc’s patients.

“I’m going to be 49 in August and now people ask me if I’m in my 30s,” she said.

One could argue that dark circles are yet another problem foisted into the spotlight by beauty companies with profit margins in mind. But considering the attention that discoloration in the eye area attracts compared with, say, an off-color elbow patch, perhaps being self-conscious about dark circles can be forgiven.

“Since I’m in sales and in front of clients, I want to look like I’m polished,” said Alison Butler, 32, a sales director from Boston.

But none of the countless creams she has tried have vanquished her dark circles, she said. Neither has staying hydrated.

Still, Ms. Butler could not help buying a \$53 eye serum from Caudalie.

“I’m willing to pay a little more and be a little more selective,” she said, “since I’ve tried so many in the past.”



Here comes the bride -- picture-perfect, thanks to the likes of Botox, veneers and stunning makeup



MinnPost illustration by Brian Barber

By Christina Capecchi

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"Your wedding day is your Oscar moment, so live it up."

So writes Editor-in-Chief Carley Roney in last fall's *The Knot Minnesota*. She offers a big-sisterly promise laced with pressure: "We'll make sure you're ready for the red carpet with the essentials for a glamour-filled celebration."

The June-July issue of *Modern Bride* strikes a similar note. "Wed like a celeb," the cover teases below the capitalized exhortation, "Get gorgeous."

But what it takes to get gorgeous has changed. A flattering dress, a liberal application of mascara and the natural cosmetic of joy no longer suffice, according to today's wedding industry. The bridal beauty on display this season depends upon more advanced interventions: fake eyelashes, professional teeth whitening and, in some cases, an injection of Botox.

"It's very popular now," said Angela Elser, owner of [Stonewater Skin & Laser Center](#) in White Bear Lake, which offers bridal discounts. "They're coming in younger and younger."

Injecting Botox to reduce under-arm sweat is popular among brides under 25, Elser said. They also get Brazilian waxes, while older brides tend to opt for more-traditional bikini waxes, devoting the majority of their cosmetic dollars to facial causes: "routine Botox and lip filler."

'Movie star syndrome'

The pressure to look perfect on your wedding day is ignited the day a woman gets a diamond, said Katie Derdoski, 27, a St. Paul writer. When she got engaged a year and a half ago, questions revolved around her appearance: how would she wear her hair, what kind of dress she envisioned, what style of makeup would she apply.

"The expectations are huge," Derdoski said. And they only mounted when she made the obligatory purchase of bridal magazines. "I bought every magazine, ripped out all the pictures I loved and put them in a binder. I'd look at them and think, 'I hope my hair looks as shiny as hers, I hope my eye makeup looks as good as hers...'"

"We're all having that movie star syndrome," Elser said. " 'My God, her skin looks amazing. This woman has no pores.' "

America's age-old obsession with celebrity has been tinged with an aura of attainability. Makeovers are fleshed out in unflinching detail on reality TV. Celebrity weddings are detailed in magazines. And the marketing of beauty and fitness products for brides has amped up.

"All these companies are jumping on the bandwagon, discovering there's a lucrative niche in the bridal market," said wedding consultant Mary Olson of Roseville-based Saratoga Weddings. Cosmetics are now presented as wedding packages, wrapped in ribbon and emotion.

"They're aggressively marketing to those brides, and they're succeeding," Olson said. "Suddenly you're thinking, 'Oh, maybe I really do need to have a seaweed wrap facial the day before the wedding so my skin glows!' "

An understanding of how seaweed benefits the complexion is not a prerequisite to applying the supposed extracts to the face.

"You get a case of wedding-brain," said Derdoski, who's planning to wear fake eyelashes at her Maui wedding. "It's really easy to get carried away. The wedding fever catches hold of everyone—no matter how grounded you are."

Minnesota brides do tend to be more grounded than the average bride, Olson said, but they still need reminding to keep their cosmetic purchases in check. "Beauty expenses can mushroom unexpectedly. When you see the budget, you think physically of the big things—the reception, the band, the caterer. It's all those incidentals that you forget about."

Brideorexia

The first step toward bridal beauty is often a sweaty one: weight loss. Jamie Campos, 22, an event planner who was married in Mounds View last May, lifted weights to look good in her strapless dress. "I was really concerned about my arms and shoulders," she said.

A growing number of exercise videos and aerobic classes cater to brides. Some fitness centers offer "bridal boot camps," a name that conveys the severity of the

mission.

The pressure can lead brides to set unrealistic weight-loss goals. At [David's Bridal](#) in Richfield, I met a pregnant woman who is getting married one month after her due date, and hoping to lose the baby weight in time.

Many Twin Cities brides are not only ambitious with weight loss, but successful, said Sue Richardson, an [Edina seamstress](#). She regularly takes wedding dresses in two sizes, which typically accounts for the loss of 4 inches—or 40 pounds.

"Brides take dieting and exercise seriously," Richardson said. "They know they're getting photos and they want to look good."

Occasionally, a bride's lofty diet fails, and Richardson has to do emergency alterations. Once, she added 12 inches to a wedding dress.

Forthcoming nuptials can tip a diet into a danger zone. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee assistant professor Lori Neighbors published [a study](#) last year on the relationship between weddings and weight lost in the journal [Appetite](#). She tracked the dieting habits of 272 engaged women who were, on average, six months from their wedding day and found that 70 percent were trying to lose more than 20 pounds. Many of the dieters used extreme methods, including skipping meals, going on liquid diets, fasting, and taking laxatives or supplements. A small number even started smoking in hopes of shedding a few pounds.

If the diet doesn't work, more extreme measures are available. Dr. Douglas Gervais, owner of [Minneapolis Plastic Surgery](#), said wedding-induced plastic surgery is on the rise. "If you're the bride, you're the center of attention, you're under the microscope, and you might want certain things done, whether it be breast augmentation, body shaping, tummy tucks, liposuction, or if you're an older bride, maybe you want your eyes or face done."

Younger brides tend to focus on improving their bodies, he said, while older brides get cosmetic surgery on body and face.

Freeze frame

Getting photo-perfect for the wedding day drives many beauty measures.

Professional teeth whitening, for example, "has become huge among brides," Olson

said.

Others take it a step further. Mandy Kiser, 27, a Rochester figure skating coach who's getting married next month, got [lumineers](#), a porcelain veneer that is bonded directly to the teeth, requiring no grinding or shaving. The procedure typically costs \$900 a tooth. Kiser had 10 teeth done—the front five on the top and bottom.

"These make my teeth bigger and straighter and whiter," Kiser said. "I'm so happy with it. They're perfect. I have perfect teeth. I'm smiling now!"

Kiser is flirting with the idea of hair extensions for her big day, and she plans to lean on the expertise of an aesthetician for her makeup, a common practice among local brides.

Sophisticated techniques can achieve more than makeup once did. Crist Ballas, a makeup artist who owns and operates Metamorphosis in St. Paul, offers brides "corrective makeup" that can hide veins, under-eye bags, tattoos, freckles and sun spots. He can even do prosthetics.

Creating a natural look can mean going against a strong cultural tide, Ballas said. "I'm surprised by how different some brides look on their wedding day—to the point where they are unrecognizable," he said. "That comes from both ends—the makeup artist's end and the expectations to look ultra-glam, which is very media-pushed. It's more of a problem today, with all the extreme makeovers. One bride wanted very, very smoky cat-shape eyes, and she had a really wild dress."

"Brides are getting more into glamour than they were 10 years ago," said Stephanie Hart, a freelance makeup artist from Woodbury. "They're a lot more cognizant of their cosmetic needs."

Frequent tanning is another trick taken up in the name of bridal beauty. "Brides come in religiously," said Jenna Reynolds, a spa consultant at Planet Beach in Hopkins. She sees brides coming in every other day in the final weeks before their wedding, and some come with their fiancé. Reynolds said it's rare to see a groom-to-be come in alone.

Grooms getting in on the act

That's not to say some grooms don't take the initiative in cosmetic preparations.

Bobby Anderson, 50, a former two-time kick-boxing champion from Hinckley got Botox for his April nuptials. He had 50 units injected at Stonewater at the price of \$14/unit.

"I really do feel better," Anderson said. "And I felt much more comfortable in front of the camera. Flash away! One of the main reasons is that my new wife is only 26. I didn't want the age gap to look glaring."



Courtesy of the Andersons Bobby and Heidi Anderson pose for pictures at their April wedding in Hinckley. To prepare for the big day, Bobby paid \$150 for a facial package and had 50 units of Botox injected, which cost him \$700. The expense was well worth it, he said.

"I believe in cosmetics," added Anderson, who plans to get another Botox injection in six months, "whatever it takes to make you feel better about yourself, inside and out. Do it if it's out there! Guys have to keep our appearances up to keep our ladies around!"

Mothers of the bride and groom are also prone to employing some cosmetic measures before their children's weddings. Take Mary, 49, a professional from Rapid City, S.D. who withheld her last name and occupation for privacy, saying, "I wanted to be as secretive as possible."

She had a lower-lid blepharoplasty done at Minneapolis Plastic Surgery to tighten her under-eye skin for younger daughter's August wedding. The procedure costs \$3,500.

"I noticed when my older daughter got married, when I smiled, I'd have these baggy eyes," Mary said. "You just don't want to look so tired, and this kind of brightens you up. So hopefully the pictures will look better this time around."

And so, the quest for wedding beauty wages on, fueled by high-octane emotion and underscored by high margins.

It isn't easy remaining level-headed about it all, Derdoski said—especially when you're a "worrywart and a perfectionist." But she's comforted by a belief that bridal bliss beautifies the face. "Being comfortable and happy are the best cosmetics—and I'm counting on that to kick in!"



3 Wrinkle Treatments That Work

By [Lindsay Lyon](#)

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Treatments abound for crow's feet and fine lines, but there's plenty of confusion about what works and what's hogwash. Now comes some clarity.

Over the past decade, University of Michigan researchers have focused on the mechanisms behind aging skin and have emerged with a better understanding of how best to tame the process—without Botox or plastic surgery. After analyzing several dozen of their studies, the team reported last month that three treatments definitely rejuvenate skin: topical [retinoic acid](#), carbon dioxide [laser resurfacing](#), and injections of cross-linked [hyaluronic acid](#). "These three, as far as I'm concerned, are the ones where the evidence is quite solid," says senior author John Voorhees, chair of the department of dermatology at the University of

Michigan's medical school (who has no financial ties to the manufacturers of the treatments studied).

Why do they work? All three are able to replenish some of what skin loses with time: collagen. Wrinkles form as collagen breaks down, which signals the cells that secrete it to stop doing so. Age and sun exposure are triggers. But this cycle isn't irreversible, says Voorhees. Treatments can sweep away the old, splintered collagen, and fool cells into making more. Since collagen has a half life of 15 years, once it's laid down, lots will last, he says. "What we're trying to say is that you actually have to do something to the skin to make it repair and rejuvenate," says Voorhees. "You can't expect magically to put on a potion which will stimulate the repair process deep in the skin. It doesn't happen."

An informal survey of other dermatologists found agreement that these approaches work, along with a few alternatives:

Retinoic acid. Derived from vitamin A (though not the kind found naturally in carrots and other orange-red vegetables) creams that contain retinoic acid require a prescription and work by gradually stimulating the formation of new collagen. For best results, Voorhees recommends creams with .025 or .05 percent tretinoin (another name for retinoic acid).

Certain over-the-counter products have similar wrinkle-smoothing effects, like those containing [retinol](#), which is converted to retinoic acid in the body. However, many of these products are useless, warns Voorhees, because they contain infinitesimal amounts of the key ingredient. Though there's no precise way to tell a dud from a winner, cosmetic dermatologist Zoe Diana Draelos, editor of the *Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology*, advises checking labels to see where retinol falls in the lineup: If it's among the last five ingredients listed, it's probably there to preserve the product; if it's listed higher up, it's probably there in skin-benefiting concentrations.

Some caveats: Even with prescription-grade products, don't expect more than modest improvement, which can take between six weeks and six months to notice. You'll probably experience some flaking, skin tightness, and increased sun sensitivity, says Voorhees. These creams are best for small lines around the eyes and upper cheeks, not for deep folds, adds Draelos, though her wrinkle-free patients often apply them pre-emptively. Because vitamin A can cause birth defects, she says pregnant women should avoid these products.

Instead try topical [vitamin C](#), which microscopic studies have shown can also boost collagen, says New York-based dermatologist Arielle Kauvar, who specializes in the treatment of aging skin. Whether in cream, serum, or gel form, it's primarily used because of its [antioxidant](#) properties, which inhibit free radical damage from the sun, she says. While formulations don't require a prescription, potency can be tough to gauge. Effective products would most likely contain 10 to 20 percent L-ascorbic acid (a type of vitamin C), she says, and come in opaque containers: Exposure to light saps their strength over time. "It's a preventive measure," she says, "but it has some restorative benefits."

Carbon dioxide laser resurfacing. For those desiring more drastic results, carbon dioxide laser resurfacing has been shown to be effective, says Voorhees. "You get nice, new skin," he says, "but I personally don't recommend it because it's so invasive."

The roughly hourlong procedure is typically done in an outpatient setting, and patients are usually sedated. As the laser is passed across the face, it sears through the paper-thin epidermis and into portions of the dermis—the skin's thicker layer beneath the epidermis—to purge old, damaged collagen and generate four to five times more new collagen than retinoic acid does, says Voorhees. But be prepared: Your face essentially becomes an open, oozy wound that must be rigorously cared for until healed. That means virtual house arrest for two weeks, during which skin must be soaked with ice-cold water every few hours then slathered with a layer of ointment to avoid scarring and infection. Once healed, skin may remain red for up to six months.

A newer generation of lasers ("fractionated ablatives") are less invasive, says Kauvar. Instead of burning off the skin's entire surface, microscopic beams of energy singe tiny plugs of tissue, leaving areas of untouched skin. This promotes quicker healing. Patients are usually just red and swollen for a week or so and can usually resume their daily routine in four days, says Kauvar. While one carbon dioxide laser resurfacing session may yield results that last eight years, fractionated ablatives may require two or three sessions for best effects, says Kauvar, who uses both. The traditional procedure can cost between \$5,000 to \$8,000, and the fractionated ablatives, between \$3,000 and \$5,000 per treatment, she says.

Instead try chemical peels, says Draelos. A peel promotes new collagen using acid instead of high intensity light. Healing time is less.

Cross-linked hyaluronic acid injections. For an immediate fix, many people turn to "fillers." A viscous goop is injected into facial folds and creases, much like spackle into ceiling cracks, plumping wrinkles from the inside out in about five minutes. Cells whose collagen production has waned are fooled into making more. Cross-linked hyaluronic acid is one of many materials used and is particularly effective, says Voorhees; it has essentially replaced collagen injections. How long such fillers last can depend on the amount used and wrinkle depth and can cost between \$500 to \$700 for each cubic centimeter injected, says Draelos. Sometimes there's a little swelling and a little bruising afterwards.