

Easy on THE EYE

They may be the windows to your soul but, to a passing stranger, your eyes are probably more likely to convey lack of sleep, a dodgy diet and lazy skincare habits. Luckily for you, we've sorted through the latest science to find out exactly what you need to do to keep your peepers looking peppy

WORDS CLAIRE COLEMAN

When was the last time you blinked? Probably within the last five seconds, actually.

These unconscious micro-movements mean that, even if you spent the rest of your life sitting in a darkened room (aside from being really bored and very, very pale), your eye area would age in a way the rest of your face wouldn't. It's probably why 76% of women say they worry more about their eyes than the rest of their face, and why eyelid surgery was the UK's third most common cosmetic surgery procedure of 2017.

'The eyes are one of the first areas of the face to show signs of ageing,' confirms cosmetic dermatologist Dr Sam Bunting (drsambunting.com). 'That's partly because they contain some of the most active muscles on the face (hello, smile lines and crow's feet) and partly because they're one of the areas where your lifestyle – smoking, lack of sleep, squinting in the sun, scrubbing away a smoky eyeshadow – really shows.'

In fact, research presented at last year's American Academy of Dermatology conference showed, using analysis of gene expression, that the region around the eyes can have a biological age of up to 22 years older than other parts of the face. Oof. It doesn't help that the eye area is pretty much an oil-free zone, as the skin here has fewer oil-secreting glands and, according to Japanese scientists who looked at the relationship between sebaceous glands and wrinkle depth, that means more dryness and – oh, sweet joy – more wrinkles.

The skin under the eye is also thinner, so it's on the back foot from the start. 'We know that exposure to UV rays and pollution

generates free radicals – unstable compounds that contribute to the breakdown of collagen and elastin, which are the proteins that makes skin look firm and youthful,' says aesthetic doctor David Jack (drdavidjack.com). 'If the skin is thinner to begin with, this damage is more quickly apparent.'

And the dreaded dark circles? 'There tends to be less fat underneath the skin around your eyes, which makes the darker blood vessels underneath more noticeable,' says Dr Bunting. 'This creates a shadowy look in an area that's already a natural hollow, so you can look tired, even when you're not.' That means you're looking for a product that can make this skin thicker in the long-term, and a good base for concealer in the short-term. Then, of course, there's the issue of puffiness. 'This is caused by a build-up of fluid,' explains Dr Jack. 'Some people are simply genetically more prone to it than others.'

Sorry about all the bad news in quick succession – but all's not lost. According to Dr Bunting, the eye area just happens to be one of those skincare spheres where 'a pre-emptive strike in your twenties and thirties can really pay dividends later on'. What she's talking about is dealing with these issues in a targeted approach – and yet, according to Mintel research, only 30% of British women use a dedicated eye cream. Poor show. You need a multitasking product, or a few that combine to deliver a serious shot of moisture, help boost the thickness of the skin and, if you're prone to puffiness, help to dampen that down. Too much to ask? Not at all. Here are the scientifically proven ingredients you should be looking for...

GOOD
LOOKS





GOOD LOOKS



HYALURONIC ACID

'This is a potent humectant that improves hydration, helping with fine lines,' says Dr Jack. 'It's also an antioxidant suitable for use around the eyes.' **MZ Skin Depuff & Define (£90 for 15ml)** contains high levels of hyaluronic acid (HA), along with peptides and caffeine, while **Estée Lauder Advanced Night Repair Eye Concentrate Matrix (£49 for 15ml)** contains two types of HA, giving a shot of moisture that plumps and smooths.



RETINOL

Retinol has long been the anti-ageing gold standard as it works on fine lines, pigmentation and texture. However, it can irritate skin, especially around the sensitive eye area. Good news, then, that brands have devised new methods that mean you can benefit from retinol without the side effects. **Murad Retinol Youth Renewal Eye Serum (£65 for 30ml)** combines two forms of retinol with a soy-based booster that delivers results using lower concentrations. And **Olay Eyes Pro Retinol Eye Treatment (£29.99 for 15ml)** includes retinol propionate – proven to be as effective as retinol, with less irritation.



NIACINAMIDE

'Niacinamide is a form of vitamin B that helps tackle fine lines and uneven skin tone,' says Dr Bunting. 'It's a really useful ingredient as it's very well tolerated and improves tolerance of retinol-based products, too.' **EltaMD Skincare Renew Eye Gel (£37.50 for 15ml)** is a multitasking formula with niacinamide, vitamin C and hyaluronic acid, while **La Roche-Posay Toleriane Ultra Eye Contour (£15 for 20ml)** is specifically designed for sensitive skin and contains niacinamide along with effective moisturisers, including glycerine, squalene and shea butter.



CAFFEINE

'For short-term reduction in puffiness, caffeine works well because it's a vasoconstrictor, meaning it shrinks the blood vessels, getting rid of stored fluid,' explains Dr Jack. If puffiness is your problem, try **The Ordinary Caffeine Solution 5% + EGCG (£5.80 for 30ml)** – which contains green tea extract – or **Coffee Bean Caffeine Eye Cream (£20 for 30ml)**, which has rosehip oil to help moisturise the area at the same time as depuffing.



GETTY IMAGES

2.8

The number, in thousands, of UK women who had eyelid surgery in 2017 – only breast augmentation and reduction were more popular. Always worth trying the sans-scalpel approach first, though...

FIVE WAYS TO HELP YOUR EYE AREA RIGHT NOW

Facialist Kate Kerr (katekerrlondon.com) flags up daily habits that can leave their mark on the skin around your eyes



PEPTIDES

Peptides are clever little things – they're protein molecules that send signals to the body, instructing it to do things like make more collagen. **Elequra Eye Architecture Cream (£45 for 30ml)** contains a number of different types and, in independent clinical trials, 100% of users saw an average of 34% reduction of wrinkles in 28 days. **DCL Peptide Plus Eye Treatment (£86 for 15ml)** is packed with them, as well as antioxidants and moisturising ingredients.



VITAMIN C

'There's evidence that vitamin C – even at low concentrations that won't irritate the skin – can have an anti-ageing effect,' says Dr Jack. 'It's an antioxidant, so it helps both repair UV damage and protect against it. It also stimulates collagen deposition, helping to thicken skin, and can reduce pigmentation.' **Dr Dennis Gross C+ Collagen Brighten & Firm Eye Cream (£69 for 15ml)** blends vitamin C with peptides to do exactly what it says on the tin, while, for those on a tighter budget, **Nivea Q10 Plus Vit C Anti-Wrinkle + Energy Eye Treatment (£12.99 for 15ml)** blends it with other antioxidants.



SKIP WATERPROOF MASCARA
It's so tough to get off, you end up rubbing your eyes, causing inflammation and irritation, which can lead to pigmentation issues.



PUT A PILLOW UNDER YOUR MATTRESS
Or rest your head on an extra pillow. The slight slant helps lymphatic drainage, minimising puffiness around the eyes.



WEAR SUNGLASSES
Get a pair that wrap all the way around – look for big lenses and wide arms, which will offer more protection from UV damage.



SLEEP ON YOUR BACK
Sleeping on your side will always result in creases in the skin and can mean one of your eyes ages more quickly than the other.



ALWAYS REMEMBER SPF
The area around the eyes is in need of protection, but is often overlooked. Find a lightweight product you'll use regularly. **WH**