

DARK VICTORY

All you need is a battle plan to beat under-eye circles. TEXT: MICHELLE VILLET

Looked in the mirror lately? If you've noticed an ever-darker bluish tinge around your eyes that has you looking like a football linebacker, you're not alone. According to a recent Estée Lauder survey of 13,000 women, under-eye shadows (and puffiness) are our number one beauty worry. And, experts say, because of their varied causes, any plan of attack needs to be multifaceted.

SKIN DEEP "Dark circles are usually attributable to a vascular [blood vessel] bed beneath the skin,

which makes the area appear darker," says Dr. Lisa Kellett, a Toronto-based dermatologist. It doesn't help that the skin under the eyes is among the thinnest on the body, but genetics plays a major role too, since shadows are more noticeable on those with fair skin. "Another factor is age," says Kellett. "Dark circles usually become a problem around age 35. As we [get older], we lose fat in the under-eye area, making dark circles look more prominent." A third factor to add to the mix is pigmentation. Certain ethnicities have an olive-

based skin tone, which imparts a yellowish or brownish hue to the area and can get worse with sun exposure. Still, the problem isn't just a cosmetic one. Allergies, food sensitivities, a poor diet and lack of sleep can cause puffiness and shadows—and, in rare cases, the latter can indicate an underlying health condition such as a thyroid or adrenal disorder, says Kellett. (See a doctor if you notice changes in the eye area accompanied by symptoms such as weight gain and excessive sweating.) And don't forget the most obvious culprit of all: sleep deprivation. Scrimping on your beauty rest not only causes blood vessels to become more visible; it also causes swelling, which can accentuate dark circles.

IN TREATMENT What can you do if you're hearing "You look tired"—even after a solid eight hours of shut-eye? The latest crop of topical treatments targets the area with several high-tech strategies. "Strengthening the thin skin under the eyes to make it thicker is probably the most important in decreasing the look of dark circles long-term," says Calvin Davies, a research pharmacist and the founder of Dermaglow, whose Retinol-Px Intense Eye Therapy launched this spring. "Retinol and peptides encourage skin-cell turnover and collagen synthesis, which make the skin's surface smoother, firmer and more resilient. Reducing under-eye bags will also decrease the look of dark circles—[for this] we use another peptide that inhibits the leakage from blood vessels that can cause puffiness."

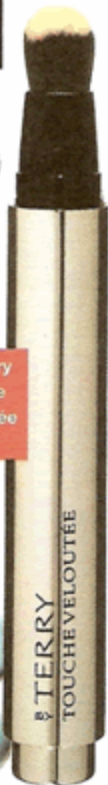
Olay Professional Pro-X offers two approaches to under-eye shadows, says Dr. Rosemarie Osborne, a principal scientist with P&G Beauty. The Eye Restorative Complex plumps up the area with palmitoyl peptides and caffeine to improve hydration, while the Discolouration Fighting Treatment targets pigmentation issues with D

BEAUTY FLASH

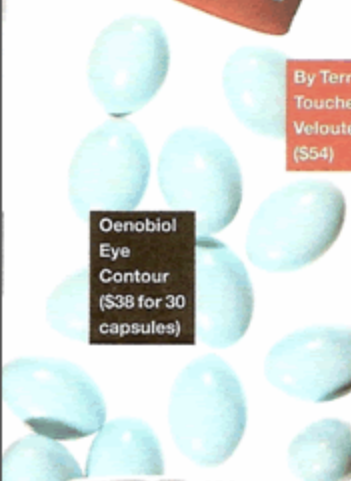
Garnier Ultra-Lift Pro Deep Wrinkle Dual Eye Cream (\$23)



By Terry Touche Veloutée (\$54)



Oenobiol Eye Contour (\$38 for 30 capsules)



La Mer The Eye Balm (\$180)



Lise Watier SYSTÈME ANTI-RIDES 15 ml Lise Watier Système Anti-Rides Bio Specific Eye Crème (\$42)



Dermaglow Retinol-Px Intense Eye Therapy (\$50)



Olay Professional Pro-X Eye Restoration Complex (\$60). For details, see Shopping Guide.



glucosamine, which improves colour evenness. "Our regimen is definitely about layering," says Osborne.

"Try massaging while applying products to drive fluid from under the eyes," says Dr. Kucy Pon, a Toronto-based dermatologist and Olay consultant. Gently pat each eyelid, starting at the bridge of the nose and working toward the outer corner.

DOCTOR'S RX Kellett, who offers a dark-circle treatment program at her Toronto clinic, says that in-office procedures produce the best results. "Laser treatments, such as those using the Nd Yag—a non-ablative laser that targets blood vessels without damaging skin tissues—have been done with some success," she says. They work by targeting vascular and pigmentation irregularities, but they can be painful and require weeks of recovery time. Kellett prefers injectable hyaluronic-acid fillers, such as Restylane or Juvederm. When used under the eyes, they attract water to the surrounding collagen fibres, resulting in a plumped-up appearance. (Hollowness accentuates shadows.) They also cover up the melanin or blood vessels that show through the skin. Results are instant, says Kellett, and you can expect them to last from four months to up to two years, at a cost of about \$650 per treatment.

FOOD FACTOR Diet and lifestyle factors can have a big impact too. Along with regular sleep and exercise, "one of the best and easiest ways to improve dark circles is to incorporate raw, antioxidant-rich foods into your daily regimen," says Dr. John Dempster, a naturopathic physician at 889 Yonge, a Toronto-based wellness clinic. He recommends drinking freshly squeezed vegetable juices, which improve skin health by helping the body absorb a greater volume and variety of nutrients. Staying hydrated combats fluid retention, which often results in a swollen, dark-looking eye area. If you're

battling serious raccoon eyes, you might even consider paying a visit to a holistic-medicine practitioner; Dempster uses individualized nutritional analysis to determine which supplements can help correct shadow-causing imbalances.

Oenobiol, a French line of ingestible skin-care products that launched in Canada this year, offers another alternative. The brand touts Eye Contour as the first nutritional supplement to combat under-eye bags and circles. "It contains polyphenols [antioxidants] from grape-seed extracts," says Dr. Marie Bejot, who formulated the range. "The extracts improve tissue oxygenation and blood-vessel circulation."

COVER UP In France, some people consider dark circles to be a sign of attractiveness. "They show that you have an active social life," says Terry de Gunzburg, a makeup artist who recently launched her own line, By Terry, in Canada. And nobody is more authoritative on the subject than de Gunzburg, who created Touche Éclat, Yves Saint Laurent's bestselling brightening concealer. "The worst approach for dark circles is to use a full-coverage concealer," she says. "When you apply it to dark or very blue circles, it turns grey. It's a disaster." A better option might be a product like de Gunzburg's Touche Veloutée—the first in a new generation of concealers that combine lightweight coverage with high-tech skin-care ingredients. Touche Veloutée contains a cocktail of antioxidants, anti-inflammatory agents and hyaluronic-acid spheres, along with soft-focus microprisms that conceal and reflect light without being heavy, explains de Gunzburg. "It's a new concept to have a concealer that also acts as a very intensive skin-care product," she says. "Products like this are the future." So, maybe dark circles aren't so hard to treat after all—the future looks brighter already! □