The truth about dark circles

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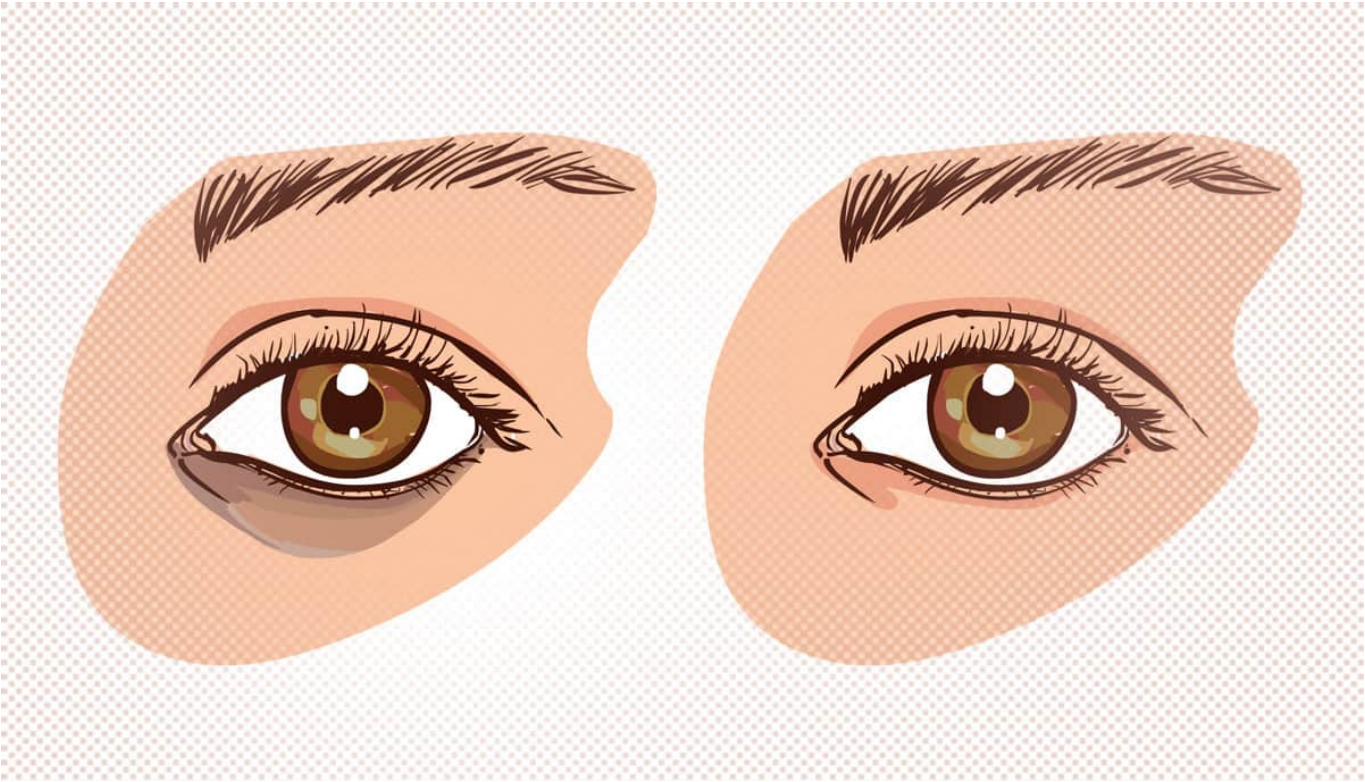

I get questions ALL the time about how to get rid of dark circles. More specifically, everyone always seems to be after a miracle product that can transform puffy, tired-looking eyes overnight.

The issue is that sometimes those bags under your eyes actually are skin deep, but, a lot of time, they go a lot deeper. A good place to start is determining whether your under-eye bags are around once in a while, or most of the time.

If you answered “most of the time”…

The bad news is that several factors probably make your skin pre-disposed. The first possibility is genetics; some people, especially those with deeper complexions are more prone to hyperpigmentation (of which dark circles are a form). Yes, super unfair, but not totally out of your control.

For starters, sunscreen IS A MUST, since sun exposure can exacerbate any kind of pigmentation. Second, an eye serum or cream with vitamin C can, over time, even out pigmentation so though you might not be able to totally erase those circles topically, you can definitely even them out a little.

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The other factor that might be responsible for constantly tired-looking eyes is thinning skin. The skin under your eyes is already pretty thin, and with age or drastic weight loss, the skin can become thinner, making the veins that sit underneath more visible.

For this, your best friend is an eye cream that's going to boost collagen production. Luckily, several newer creams contain blends of retinol that are not only safe, but the most effective at speeding up cell turnover and collagen production, plumping and firming the skin over time, reducing the shadowy appearance.

Incorporating foods rich in vitamin K also increases blood circulation and can decrease the blueish tint beneath the skin. Most green leafy vegetables contain an abundance of vitamin K, and are great to incorporate into your diet anyways.

If your dark circles are recent, or only around some of the time…

The only thing more annoying than not getting enough sleep is being asked if you're not getting enough sleep, so I'm not going to do that… because, honestly, how many of us actually do get enough sleep? Luckily, these are the easiest dark circles/bags to deal with. Two words: cooling, and caffeine.

There are TONS of eye products out there with caffeine in them, and any one of them can pretty quickly de-puff your eyes and give them a boost. For cooling (which also depuffs tired eyes) there are lots of good eye masks available these days, which come in compact packets and are usually mess-free. I absolutely love carrying these around, especially when I'm traveling, since under-eye bags are pretty much a given on long flights with a toddler!

Sleep deprived and don't have anything on hand? Just soak some tea bags in warm water, throw them in the fridge, and then put them on your eyes for a few minutes (seriously)- cooling and caffeine at the same time.

If you're totally rested, and still have annoying bags under your eyes, what then? The vast majority of people with dark circles fall into this category. If you've tried product after product and seen no difference at all, then the bags under your eyes are telling you something about what's going on in your body.

A little bit of dehydration can immediately lead to dark circles. In the short term, most eye creams on the market focus on hydration, so anything with a bit of hyaluronic acid, or anything along those lines, will give your eyes a boost. Of course, it's just a temporary boost, unless you actively rehydrate.

The other thing dark circles usually indicate is an iron or B12 deficiency. If you're vegetarian, there's a very good chance you might be deficient in one, or both, since most iron and B12 rich foods are meats, fish, and eggs. The exceptions are broccoli and other green vegetables, dairy, legumes, and cereals. It's also simple enough to find a B complex supplement, but most people find it pretty challenging to find an iron supplement that agrees with their system, so I personally like to add a few dried figs into my diet each day when I need an iron boost.

Whatever the cause of your dark circles, and whatever you choose to apply topically, I find that

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the best things to combat dark circles in the first place are also the best ways to improve your skin in general: sunscreen, tons of water, lots of leafy green vegetables, and making sure you're getting all of your vitamins, even if you need to take a good multivitamin every day. Anything else is just a bonus!

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