

RECOMMENDED BY EXPERTS | AUG. 30, 2021

The Best Eye Creams for Mature Skin, According to Dermatologists

By Cheryl Kramer Kaye



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Nature is a marvel: Just as fine lines become real wrinkles and dark under-eye circles take up permanent residence, our ability to see things up close starts to go. But put on your readers and damn, the crepey skin, crow's feet, and sagging lids come into sharp relief.

“Eyes, then neck, then hands,” says Marina Peredo, MD, dermatologist and associate clinical professor of Dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. “That’s the order in which you’ll see the signs of aging first.” The reason for that is twofold, explains Doris Day, MD, dermatologist and clinical associate professor of dermatology at the New York University Langone Medical Center, who offers a little anatomy lesson: “The skin around the eyes is the thinnest skin on the body. It’s also an area with very little structural support since the eyes sit in a hole called the eye socket. The eyeballs are held in place by muscles and ligaments, but the skin there has very little support.”

That thin skin is why the right eye cream can make a difference: Active ingredients can penetrate more easily there than on other parts of your face and body. “By using an eye cream in your 30s, you can delay using toxins, fillers, and lasers around the eyes,” says Paredo. “But in your 50s, you’ll want to use an eye cream *in addition* to those modalities.” Here, the eye creams that the doctors use and recommend, and the improvements that you can — and can’t — expect to see.

The Best Eye Cream for Crow’s Feet



Skinbetter Science EyeMax AlphaRet Overnight Cream

\$110

When the little crinkles around your eyes start to look more like full-on wrinkles, there's one ingredient every dermatologist loves: "When I'm trying to stimulate some collagen, retinol is the gold standard," says Michelle Henry, MD, a New York City dermatologist and Mohs surgeon. The original Skin Better Science AlphaRet face cream picked up all kinds of awards for its synergistic blend of retinol plus an AHA; we have similar expectations for the brand new eye-area version. Keep in mind, the skin around the eyes is awfully sensitive for some, and retinols in general are notoriously drying and irritating. If you experience sensitivity, Henry suggests the "sandwich method": a simple, moisturizing eye cream directly on your skin, then your retinol, then a moisturizer on top.

Best Drugstore Eye Cream



Olay Regenerist Retinol24 Night Eye Cream

\$35

~~4.7~~ ~~now 26% off~~

“Not many retinol creams are well tolerated around the eye, but the Olay retinol eye cream is really nice,” says Henry. That’s because it’s packed with hydrators to counteract retinol’s drying effects. It also eliminates other irritants like fragrance and synthetic dyes. The niacinamide in the formula tag-teams with the retinol to tackle fine lines and wrinkles, while peptides help firm the skin.

Best Eye Cream for Dark Circles



Pause Eye Renewal Treatment

\$78

Before you treat dark circles, it’s important to pinpoint the cause, because there’s more than one: It could be that the area under your eyes is dark because the skin is thin and you can see dark blood vessels showing through. You could have hyperpigmentation darkening the surface of your skin. Or it might be because you’ve lost volume underneath your eyes, leaving you with a hollowed-out look that creates dark shadows. Or maybe it’s all three! The first two scenarios can be improved with an eye cream; but according to all of our docs, the not-so-lovely-sounding tear trough deformity (undereye hollows) is beyond a cream’s capabilities. Says Dara Liotta, MD, FACS, a dual-board certified facial plastic surgeon in New York City, “You need filler for that.”

Caffeine, unsurprisingly, can help wake up the look of your eyes by constricting the blood vessels underneath, clearing away some of the darkness, while vitamin K is known to strengthen the walls of the vessels. You’ll find them both, along with peptides and plumping hyaluronic acid, in this super-lightweight treatment (perfect under makeup) created specifically for women in the stages of menopause.

Best Eye Cream for the Other Type of Dark Circles



Clinique Even Better Eyes Dark Circle Corrector

\$42

For surface hyperpigmentation, most of our docs recommended vitamin C, an antioxidant that’s best known for its brightening powers. “Right now, I’m struggling a bit with hyperpigmentation,” says Henry. “If I’m not actively treating it, I can get little raccoon eyes.” She uses this C treatment, which omits parabens and fragrance, because it’s super-safe for her sensitive eyes.

Best Eye Cream for Undereye Puffiness



MD Solar Sciences MD Restore Eye Gel

\$50

Puffiness is another situation in which there could be more than one culprit. There’s the kind of under-eye puffiness that’s

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caused by fluid retention: maybe you didn't get enough sleep, or drank too much wine, or ate salty food. Those are usually gone by the end of the day. But then there's the trickier type, explains Liotta: "the puffy bags caused by the fat pad under the eye that shifts with time." Those just don't go away, and won't without surgical intervention, known as a lower blepharoplasty.

For the temporary type, you can speed their deflation with an eye gel, which cools the skin to help the excess fluid be reabsorbed, kind of like how an ice pack reduces swelling. The other depuffer: "caffeine, which can help temporarily tighten things up," says David E. Bank, MD, dermatologist and assistant clinical professor at Columbia University Medical Center. You'll find both in the MD Solar Sciences formula, plus calming ingredients like chamomile, seaweed extract, and aloe.

Best Eye Cream for Crepey Texture



Neocutis Lumière Firm Illuminating and Tightening Eye Cream

\$108

On his own eye area, Bank uses this multi-tasking cream, with caffeine, brightening vitamin C, collagen-boosting peptides, and the special sauce that Bank looks for: growth factors. “Growth factors are proteins that promote the growth, development, and maturation of cells, and play a role in maintaining the firmness and elasticity of skin,” he explains. “Around the eyes they help with wrinkles, laxity, and pigmentation.”

Best Eye Cream for Sagging Lids



Glo Skin Beauty Eye Restore

\$46

Just as New Yorkers head to Florida for the winter when they hit a certain age, lids start to head south, too. It's called acquired ptosis, and it's the reason many people seek out a surgical eye lift. You can make a dent in the droop with elastin-boosting ingredients. Dermatologist Dendy Engelman, MD, assistant clinical professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, likes the lift she sees from this cream, which boasts a 35 percent increase in elastin production within 24 hours thanks to an active form of vitamin C. The formula has the whole lineup of top eye-area ingredients, including peptides, vitamin K for dark circles, and natural retinol alternative bakuchiol, plus blue light protection for when you're squinting at your screen.

Best Eye Cream To Treat Milia



Renée Rouleau Overnight Eye Serum

\$50

One of the most annoying, if not immediately apparent, eye area issues is milia: little white dots that resemble whiteheads, but are actually keratin trapped under the skin. “Milia is common in mature skin because our cells don’t turn over as quickly and layers of dead skin cells can build up on the surface, trapping keratin underneath,” says Bank. While a doctor can remove milia, don’t go on an excavation mission at home. AHAs, like the ones found in this serum, will chemically exfoliate the surface cells so the milia can work their way out. It’s balanced with calming aloe and allantoin to minimize irritation.

Best Eye Cream to Fake It Til You Make It



Tula Skin Care Rose Glow & Get It

\$24

~~\$30~~ now 20% off

This is the treatment you'll want on those "Oof, I look tired" mornings. Super-flattering topical brighteners make your eyes instantly look more awake while caffeine de-puffs, hyaluronic acid plumps, and a hint of menthol gives your skin a comforting, cooling sensation. The prebiotics and probiotics in the formula help restore your skin's barrier function to minimize irritation, in case you also want to bring in some of the bigger ingredient guns.

Best Eye Cream for Minimalists



MM Skincare Repose Serum

\$85

Sometimes adding another step into your beauty routine is enough to break you. With that in mind, Ellen Marmur, MD, dermatologist and associate clinical professor in both the departments of dermatology and genetics & genomic research at Mount Sinai, created a series of serums intended to be used everywhere above the shoulders. Apply this one before bed not only for its collagen-boosting and cell-repair properties, but also for its calming aromatherapeutic essential oils of lavender, chamomile, and sandalwood.

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