

**EYES TIRED**

“Puffy eyes are caused by water retention in very soft tissue,” says Cape Town dermatologist Dr Dagmar Whitaker. Fluid always looks for the place of least resistance, and the delicate tissue around the eyes is the perfect victim.

The epidermis around the eye is only 0,020mm thick, whereas the skin on the rest of your body is about 0,045mm thick. “As we age, the elasticity in this area decreases, making it even easier for fluid to collect in the eye area,” says Whitaker, which is why eyes can appear more tired as we age, even if we are well rested.

Puffy eyes are typically worse in the morning, as fluid accumulates in the tissues surrounding the eye while we’re lying down. “Gravity and movement help distribute our body fluids after we get out of bed,” adds New York doctor of naturopathic medicine, Dr Sarah Cimperman.

Puffy eyes are not the same as bags under the eyes, which are usually a cosmetic problem, resulting either from tissue damage through rough handling of the delicate skin under the eye or simply aging of the eye tissues.

While puffy eyes are typically the result of sleep deprivation and

fatigue, they may be the body’s response to internal toxins, and can indicate a number of issues, from infection, environmental or food allergies, to dehydration, kidney, thyroid or liver problems, or hypertension, which causes fluid to be pushed into surrounding eye tissue. “Puffy eyes and dark circles that don’t resolve are a symptom of an underlying problem,” says Cimperman. She adds that more than 400 chemicals have been detected in human blood and fat tissue and many of them have been linked to dysfunction in the body. “If done properly, detoxification can renew vitality and resolve minor health problems, including puffy eyes or dark circles under the eyes.”

Genetics can also play a factor, so check your family photos for a trend, too.



*eyes*  
**WIDE OPEN**

*Wake up tired-looking eyes with these wellness tips from the pros. by LISA EVANS*

**A FEW LATE NIGHTS AND TOO-EARLY MORNINGS, AND EVEN YOUR DAILY CUP OF JAVA CAN'T SEEM TO WAKE UP YOUR TIRED, PUFFY EYES. BUT EVEN IF YOU AREN'T SUFFERING FROM SLEEP DEPRIVATION, PUFFY EYES CAN MAKE YOU LOOK AS THOUGH YOU'VE BEEN BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS.**

## MAKE-UP TRICKS

A little make-up can give tired-looking eyes an instant boost. Make-up artist Cindy Horton recommends using a light to medium liquid concealer, one shade lighter than your foundation or skin tone.

Make sure your skin is clean and well moisturised before applying. Apply three dots of concealer to the eye area and gently blend them into the skin using a make-up sponge, until the entire area is covered. Then, using a large-bristle brush, dust the area with a loose natural powder to set the concealer and prevent it from moving into the creases of the eye.

Mascara can make eyes appear larger and more awake. Eye shadow can also play some tricks. "When applying eye shadow, you want to emphasise the natural shape of the eye, which reduces the appearance of puffiness," says Horton, who recommends applying a medium eye shadow in the crease of the eye and a lighter colour on the lid.

"Place a dab of light shimmer dust into the inner corners, which will brighten up the eye," she suggests.

## CHECK THE INGREDIENTS

Many eye creams promise to reduce the appearance of puffy eyes and dark circles, but how do you know which one will be effective? When shopping for cosmetics, check the list of ingredients for these eye-friendly nutrients:

Vitamin A and C are natural collagen-boosters that fill in the sunken areas that create dark shadows under your eyes. Vitamin B complex moisturises skin and prevents dryness. *Bulbinella frutescens* is an anti-inflammatory that helps to reduce puffy eyes. Co-enzyme Q10, calendula and ginkgo biloba improve blood flow and circulation, and licorice calms allergic skin.

## DO COLD CUCUMBERS REALLY WORK?

Yes, cold cucumber slices left on the eyes for 15 minutes work to tighten skin and absorb fluid. The cold from the fridge aids vasoconstriction (narrowing of the

## COMMON EYECARE MISTAKES

You may think you're helping your eyes but, in fact, these actions can exacerbate the problem:

**Rubbing eyes:** "The No 1 enemy for puffy eyes is mechanical trauma, meaning rubbing your eyes," says Whitaker. Splash some water on your face to wake up your sleepy eyes.

**Grabbing a "pick-me-up":** Reaching for a cup of java or a chocolate bar are counter-productive, as coffee causes dehydration, and sugar acts as an inflammatory in the body and can result in under-eye bags.

**Skipping the gym:** Exercise is vital for a healthier complexion. This is especially important for those who have desk jobs, where sitting all day in air-conditioned environments adds to puffy and tired eyes.

**Make-up mistakes:** While make-up can help to cover up puffiness and dark circles, overdoing it will make things worse. "Too much concealer will become cakey," says Horton. Avoid adding powder to the outer area of the eye, as this tends to emphasise fine lines and wrinkles.

**Wearing contact lenses day and night:** Overuse of contact lenses is a sure-fire path to puffy eyes. Remove your lenses when you get home from work and give your eyes the evening to breathe.

blood vessels), while the moisture helps to rejuvenate the skin. The B vitamins and zinc in cucumbers help to reduce dark circles, and the vitamin C and folate help to reduce puffiness.

## FOODS THAT WAKE UP TIRED EYES

"To really make a long term difference, what you put inside your body is more important than what you put on your skin. And what you don't eat may be more important than what you do eat," adds Cimperman.

An elimination diet can help determine if food allergies or food insensitivities are involved. Avoid sugar, processed foods and any food additives, and the top allergens including gluten, dairy, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish and soy for four weeks. Then re-introduce them one by one, 48 hours apart, and observe any reaction. To improve the look of your skin, Cimperman recommends that you eat lots of dark green leafy vegetables, as these are high in beta carotene, which helps protect against sun damage, and chlorophyll, which helps your liver detox all the chemicals that you might come across on a daily basis. Make sure you have enough healthy fats in your diet (such as cold pressed oils, raw nuts and seeds and avocado).

Cimperman adds that, ideally, you should make sure you drink enough water every day. Caffeinated drinks, she adds, do not count, as they act as diuretics, which can have a dehydrating effect on the body. Filtered (or tap water) is best, but unsweetened tea (green, white, herbal, hot or cold) counts towards your water intake.

Potassium-rich foods such as apricots, yogurt, dates, pears and figs also help to reduce puffy eyes and regulate the body's water retention. ■