

STYLE & SPY



Eyes Wide Open

The quest for youth now begins when you're still in the midst of yours. *Danielle Stein* gets an eyeful.

THE WOMAN AT THE COSMETICS COUNTER called it a marionette line. A friend, trying to be comforting, shrugged it off as a laugh line. My boyfriend, clearly lying, claimed he saw nothing. But it was there: a fine crease above the left corner of my mouth. And so, at the time, I did what any 26-year-old woman would: I began obsessively smothering the offending crease with eye cream, though it was several inches south of my eyes.

A confession: I began using eye cream before makeup. I first discovered its majestic effects on the psyche, if not the ocular region, in middle school. While most girls were drawing Wet n Wild turquoise borders around their lashes, I was infusing the region with antioxidants. Even then, at an age universally marked by a yearning to be older, I knew some parts of me were better off young.



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

Eye cream—and I collected dozens of versions through adolescence and postadolescence—became my talisman. I believed in it. Logically, I knew it probably couldn't keep pace with the drinking binges, sleepless nights, and smoky bars of my twenties, but I felt that if I applied it religiously, morning and night, the universe might somehow grant my wish for an uncreased face.

After the appearance of that first semi-wrinkle my dermatologist told me matter-of-factly that nothing short of a shot of Restylane would help. But I was unwilling to submit to needles so early in life, so I sought out the advice of aestheticians, who recommended everything from glycolic peels to microdermabrasion to ultrasound sessions to lasers. Confused, I slunk home to my product closet and dug into the eye cream—I had accumulated serums, antiaging lotions, and retinols galore, but eye cream still seemed like the strongest weapon in my arsenal, the thing standing between me and inevitable shar-pei-dom.

Sound logic it wasn't. "In most skincare lines, the eye product is actually the lightest in terms of active ingredients, because skin around the eye is so thin and sensitive," New York dermatologist Channing Barnett says. Nevertheless, eye cream, along with moisturizer, is what she recommends to patients in their twenties as a first, ahem, line of defense. "It's all about hydration. When skin gets dried out it starts to look crinkled."

Dr. Barnett is 33 and, I discovered upon meeting her recently, flawlessly complected. I was still sporting that first line and the few others that have surfaced in the intervening years, so I was desperate to learn her tricks. And she revealed them without hesitation: injections a couple of times a year, Retin-A every other night, glycolic pads on the nights in between, occasional use of the Silk-Peel Dermalinfusion, a microdermabrasion-on-steroids machine. And, of course, eye cream.

My regimen is minor league in comparison: the occasional glycolic facial, an ever-rotating slew of products, a new relationship with a Clarisonic cleansing brush. But it comforted me to learn that the one thing we both use daily is eye cream, though I understand that I must finally come to terms with its limitations. Still, I asked if my years of dutiful application might at least save me some Botox down the road. "Yes, I think so," she said earnestly. And that was all I needed to hear.

CREAMS OF THE CROP 1. Origins Plantscription Eye Treatment (\$42.50), origins.com. 2. Clarins Eye Contour Gel (\$35), clarins.com. 3. Lancôme Rénergie Eye (\$75), lancome-usa.com. 4. Eve Lom Eye Cream (\$75), spacenk.com. 5. Kiehl's Midnight Recovery Eye (\$36), kiehls.com. 6. Estée Lauder Re-Nutriv Eye Cream (\$80), esteelauder.com. 7. Perricone MD Firming Eye Cream (\$65), perriconemd.com. 8. SkinCeuticals AOX Eye Gel (\$85), skinceuticals.com.