

REAL SIMPLE

LIFE MADE EASIER

the ONE SMALL CHANGE DIET

15 simple steps
to a leaner,
healthier you



+
HOW TO:
STOP FIGHTING
ABOUT MONEY

LIVE HAPPILY
WITH A MESSY
PERSON

MASTER THE
20-MINUTE
DINNER

CARE FOR
YOURSELF
WHILE
CARING FOR
ANOTHER

When your regular routine doesn't feel like enough

What at-home skin-care products do well: Cleanse, moisturize, plump, and protect. Where they fall (gulp) short?

Addressing deeper problems, like lines, sun spots, and dark circles. This guide to next-level treatments helps take out some of the sting (and the mystery).



THE GUIDE
beauty

"IT IS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE to erase under-eye darkness with an over-the-counter cream," says Dendy Engelman, a Manhattan dermatologic surgeon. "I see patients spend thousands of dollars on products that promise to get rid of dark circles, and while their under-eye skin may be smoother, thanks to those creams, the darkness never goes away. If they would put that money toward a prescription cream or a more powerful in-office treatment, they would be far happier with the result." This is not a truth most people want to hear. It's easier (and usually less expensive) to apply an over-the-counter cream each night, believing it will make all unwanted signs of aging disappear. But there are limits to how aggressive topical creams, even those that require a

prescription, can be. And so for issues that start deep in the skin's dermis, those products may not get you all the way to the finish line. What will? The in-office treatments covered in this story. *Real Simple* asked top dermatologists which aging issues are hardest to treat at home—and how these same conditions may be successfully diminished by an M.D. Read on for their most common strategies, plus additional options for times the recommended regimen is either not enough or not quite right for you.

Written by Genevieve Monsma
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COMPLEXION COMPLAINT

Sun spots

IN-OFFICE ATTACK: Zap excess pigment with a laser treatment that targets brown melanin. Three options (with funny-sounding proprietary names) are the Alexandrite, the Q-switch, and the Nd:YAG. An intense pulsed light (IPL) treatment is another (non-laser) option. Note: Going to a dermatologist, not a medi-spa technician, is imperative for dark-spot treatment. Why? First, "to make sure what you're targeting is indeed a sun spot and not skin cancer, such as melanoma, which may become worse if incorrectly diagnosed and left untreated," says Tanya Kormeili, a Santa Monica dermatologist and a clinical instructor of dermatology at UCLA. Second, because while the procedures are fairly straightforward on some skin, different complications can arise on various complexions, and improper treatment could cause burning or scarring, warns Kormeili.

COST: Laser sessions are close to \$500 and up, but one or two sessions are often enough to eradicate the spot(s). The average cost of one IPL treatment is around \$450; most patients need three to four.

EXPECT THIS: Both lasers and IPL feel hot as the device zaps. But the procedures typically take just a few seconds per spot. After the treatment, the area will darken, then flake off within two weeks.

RESULTS: Once the spot is gone, the result is technically permanent. But the area could start overproducing melanin again if exposed to ultraviolet (UV) rays, so most doctors stress daily sun protection.

Not enough/not right for you?

Some doctors advocate using a topical lightening product prior to a laser or IPL treatment. "I've found that

lightening a spot, even slightly, before we use lasers garners better, faster results," says Engelman, who puts her patients on an eight-week regimen of a prescription lightening treatment, such as Tri-Luma (a combination of a retinoic acid, a corticosteroid, and hydroquinone). Gervaise Gerstner, a Manhattan dermatologist, says she has found success dabbing a spot with a swab soaked in a strong acid, like TCA (trichloroacetic acid), to remove several layers of skin. Sometimes this is enough to sizzle away the color. Liquid nitrogen may also be used in this way.

COST: Tri-Luma is about \$120 per tube. The average cost of using acid or liquid nitrogen on a spot is usually \$200 to \$400.

EXPECT THIS: Most creams help fade, but do not totally erase, spots. That's why they are used in combination with, not as a substitute for, lasers. The acid or liquid-nitrogen spot treatment will burn briefly, and the skin may look red for several weeks before fading to your natural tone.

RESULTS: Removing a spot with acid or liquid nitro-

gen can be permanent if you are diligent about sun protection.

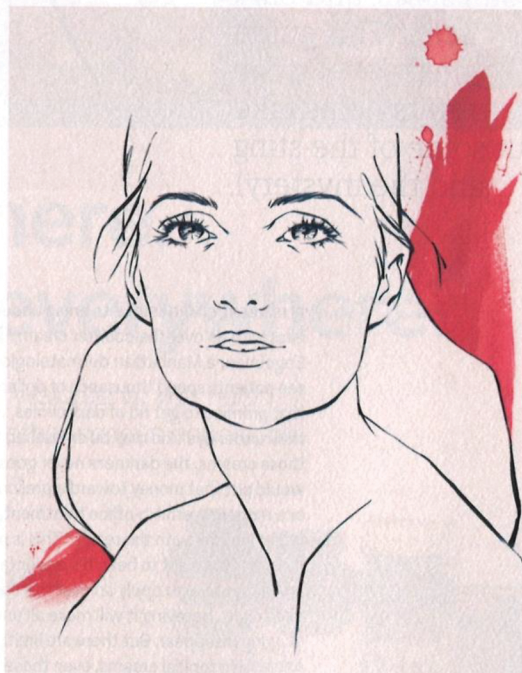
COMPLEXION COMPLAINT

Slack jawline

IN-OFFICE ATTACK: Inject a volumizing filler, such as Voluma, Radiesse, or Restylane, above the jaw to pull slack skin taut. "It's like putting pillows beneath a comforter," says Michelle Yagoda, a Manhattan plastic surgeon. "You haven't changed the comforter's length, but the pillows prop it up so it doesn't hang so far off the bed." Some doctors inject just above the jawline; others aim for the tops of the cheeks and temples, since those areas hollow with age, and putting filler there rebalances the face.

COST: About \$850 and up.

"The face is the only place on the body where muscle is attached to skin," says Michelle Yagoda, a Manhattan plastic surgeon. And "each time the muscle moves, so does the skin, creating deep wrinkles that cannot be smoothed with creams alone."



EXPECT THIS: Injecting takes about 15 minutes and feels more like uncomfortable pressure than pain. You can use an ice pack during the treatment and on and off for 24 hours afterward. Bruising is possible.

RESULTS: A lifted result can last up to two years—and possibly longer, because the treatment may stimulate collagen production in the area, leading to long-term plumping. "This could be because injecting the filler is like a small trauma and causes the repair process to start, during which collagen is produced," says Yagoda.

Not enough/not right for you?

You may also target slack skin with a tightening treatment, such as Ultherapy or Thermage. They use ultrasound and radio-frequency technology, respectively, to "heat the skin, create thermal damage, and boost collagen production," says Mona Gohara, an associate clinical professor of dermatology at Yale University. Or a doctor can inject Kybella, a new, U.S. Food and Drug Administration–approved synthetic form of bile acid (yes) that breaks down fat cells in a double chin and makes the jawline look less jowly, says Gohara.

COST: Ultherapy and Thermage each average about \$2,500, and most patients need one to two sessions. Kybella will run you an average of \$1,500 for one treatment of up to 50 small injections; many patients need two to three treatments spaced about a month apart.

EXPECT THIS: Tightening treatments are painful, even after a topical or injectable anesthetic has been applied, and can take up to an hour. Kybella can be uncomfortable but should take no more than 15 minutes. There may be two to three days of discomfort and swelling afterward.

RESULTS: It can be two to three months before you see the lifting result of a tightening treatment



because collagen boosting (and collagen production) take time. But a good result can last for two or more years. Results, however, vary widely: Some patients enjoy dramatic improvements, while others barely notice a difference. As for Kybella, the results are permanent because the destroyed fat cells cannot come back.

COMPLEXION COMPLAINT Forehead wrinkles

IN-OFFICE ATTACK: Relax the muscles under the creases by injecting a neurotoxin, such as Botox or Dysport. "The face is the only place on the body where muscle is attached to skin," says Yagoda. And "each time the muscle moves, so does the skin, creating deep wrinkles that cannot be smoothed with creams alone."

COST: About \$350 on average.

EXPECT THIS: The injections typically take less than 15 minutes, and pain is minimal (quick pricks). Post-treatment, an ice pack can bring down swelling. Bruising is also possible.

RESULTS: For first-timers, full muscle relaxation may take up to two weeks; veterans may smooth out after two or three days. For all patients, the treated muscles should remain relaxed for three to five months. For very deep lines, Yagoda says, it may

take two treatments spaced three months apart to relax the muscles thoroughly enough that the line completely vanishes.

Not enough/not right for you?

If a deep crease is still visible two weeks after your injection and there is no visible muscle movement, some doctors use a thin hyaluronic acid filler, such as Restylane, to fill it in. Yagoda, however, advocates holding off on filler in the same area until after a second round of neurotoxin, for the reason that she outlines above. "Injecting sooner than that puts you at risk for developing a bump or a ridge along a line that would have eventually smoothed out on its own," says Amy Derick, a dermatologist in Barrington, Illinois.

COST: On average, \$600.

EXPECT THIS: Quick pricks.

RESULTS: There may be initial swelling, but it should subside within a day or two, revealing the result. Bruising is common. The area typically remains plumped for up to a year. Keep in mind, though, that fillers help the skin build more of its own collagen, so even after the injectables have worn off, a crease should never become as deep as it was initially.

COMPLEXION COMPLAINT Broken capillaries

IN-OFFICE ATTACK: One to three treatments with a laser (Nd:YAG or a pulsed-dye laser, such as the Vbeam) or with an IPL device that targets red pigment will destroy dilated or broken capillaries.

COST: One laser or IPL treatment to remove a single capillary can cost \$150 and up; most people need from one to three treatments for each capillary.

EXPECT THIS: As the capillary is being annihilated, you may feel as if

you're being poked with a small, hot stick. The zapping is over in seconds.

RESULTS: Once the blood vessel has been destroyed, it will not come back. However, going to a reputable physician is key, because overly aggressive zapping "can irritate skin and cause new broken capillaries to appear," says Yagoda.

Not enough/not right for you?

Mirvaso, a prescription-strength cream, is like Visine for the skin, temporarily reducing redness by stemming excessive blood flow in the face. It is used most often for rosacea but can also help camouflage a web of broken capillaries.

EXPECT THIS: After applying Mirvaso, most people see redness reduction within an hour.

COST: Mirvaso is about \$100 a tube.

RESULTS: Temporary. The redness will come back after about 12 hours or whenever you wash off the Mirvaso.

COMPLEXION COMPLAINT

Chronic dark circles

IN-OFFICE ATTACK: "Circles are often caused by thin skin that allows blood vessels to show through," says Maria Bonilla, a dermatologist in San Diego. For some, thin skin is genetic; for others, it's a result of sagging that stretches the under-eye area and makes it more transparent. Injecting the tear trough (the area under the inner corner of the eye) with a hyaluronic filler, such as Restylane or Juvederm, will plump up the under-eye skin, diminishing darkness.

COST: The average cost of a hyaluronic acid filler is about \$600 per treatment. While some may require a touch-up a few weeks later, most doctors view this as a one-visit procedure.

EXPECT THIS: "The injections are almost painless, but it can be nerve-racking to have a needle that close

An insider's look

As a U.S. Air Force major in the medical corps during Operation Desert Storm, dermatologist LINDA FRANKS treated skin cancer, infections, and rashes that prevented airmen from performing their duties. Today she practices cosmetic dermatology in New York City, where she balances helping patients feel beautiful with helping them realize that they already are.

ONE OF MY SIX DAUGHTERS walks into the kitchen and announces she's ugly. She, of course, is not. "You know the rules," I reply. "Tell me four positive things about yourself." I adopted this tactic when my girls were little, figuring that zero tolerance for self-effacing comments would build self-esteem. Clever, right?

It didn't work. Despite their selfie-posting world, my beautiful daughters (ages 15 to 39), along with their friends, refuse to name anything they like about themselves. The same goes for most of my patients. As a dermatologist, I ask this question all day long: "What do you like about your face?" Only reluctantly

will a patient admit that she likes anything.

Why is this? Perhaps we are hardwired to be self-critical, prompting us to primp to attract the hardest mate. Surely social media plays a role. We're bombarded with perfectly spun photos, including the cosmetic brochures in my office that display unwrinkled 50-year-olds. The truth is, these procedures are meant to reinforce facial structural support, not to "make me beautiful," as patients request.

Just as important as the technique is the mind-set of the doctor. Phrases like "I can fix that" can be interpreted as "You are broken." When these statements are heard by a vulnerable patient, they can be internalized. Don't get me wrong—I like the visual effect as much as the next person. I decided to treat my own forehead for the first time at age 39, when my three-year-old daughter, sitting in the grocery cart, said, "Mommy, there's a big crack in your forehead." It felt wonderful to have control over that "crack." But less is more: My forehead lines are softer but not absent.

Perhaps one day I'll hear one of my daughters say to my granddaughter, "Tell me four positive things..." And I'll smile, crow's-feet and all.

to your eye," says Gerstner. "You may also be bruised and swollen for about a week."

RESULTS: You should see the final result once the swelling goes down. As with most hyaluronic fillers, results last 6 to 12 months. But you may see longer-lasting improvement because filler boosts the skin's own collagen production in that area.

Not enough/not right for you?

For some people, dark circles are tied to excess pigment in the area, not to thin skin. "This is more common with darker complexions," says Bonilla, who cites prescription-strength lightening topicals containing hydroquinone (such as Tri-Luma) as her preferred strategy. Gerstner uses medical-strength hydroquinone pads.

For faster and more dramatic results, some doctors use peels to "destroy surface skin where the pigment is darkest," says Yagoda, who recommends the TCA peel.

COST: Medical-strength bleaching creams generally cost about \$150. A TCA peel averages \$650.

EXPECT THIS: Bleaching creams and pads may irritate delicate under-eye skin. A TCA peel will sting but will be on the under-eye area for only a couple of minutes. After an aggressive peel, your skin will look raw. It takes about a week to heal.

RESULTS: How significantly a medical-strength topical bleaching product fades under-eye darkness depends on how pigmented the area was to start. "In my experience, most people see about a 35 percent improvement after using a topical treatment daily for 8 to 12 weeks," says Gerstner. After that, you can maintain the results by using that topical twice a week. If you're after more dramatic results (and can afford nearly two weeks of downtime), a TCA peel can garner even more improvement.