

SHAPE

7 Causes of Dark Circles Under Eyes, According to Dermatologists

Find out what could be to blame for those bags under your eyes *beyond* not getting enough sleep.

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How to treat it: Unfortunately, there's not much you can do when it comes to your DNA. And while there's no way to prevent dark circles caused by genetics, diligently applying SPF can help keep them from getting worse. "Sun protection is a must for everyone but particularly those who have genetic darkening since extra sunlight can worsen the condition," says [Roberta Del Campo, M.D.](#), a dermatologist at Del Campo Dermatology and Laser Institute and medical advisor for Babor, a skin-care brand.

Thin Skin or Loss of Volume

As you age, the skin under your eyes gradually loses its structure, causing the eyes to appear more sunken. "Darkness under the eye that looks hollow is shadowing caused by complexion changes and lack of fullness associated with normal skin aging," explains Dr. Zeichner. And because the skin around your peepers is particularly delicate at any age, blood vessels can also become more prominent as the years go by, thereby playing a part in a darkened appearance, says Dr. Del Campo.

Lack of Sleep

One of the most common causes of dark circles under the eyes is not getting enough zzz's. A night of poor sleep increases the levels of the stress hormone cortisol in the body, which can trigger your heart to beat faster and your blood vessels to dilate (a process known as vasodilation), according to the [American Psychological Association](#). The dark circles when you're tired are due to the widening of blood vessels near the surface of the skin, explains Dr. Del Campo.



Allergies

Dark under-eye circles caused by allergies are sometimes called allergy shiners thanks to pollen season's ability to take (what can look like) a shot at your face. No matter the name, however, the discoloration is usually the result of nasal congestion.

Seasonal allergies often lead to nasal congestion, which happens when the tissues and blood vessels in and around the nose become swollen with excess fluid, according to the [Mayo Clinic](#). Blood then begins to pool under your eyes and these swollen veins dilate and darken, leading to darkness and puffiness, says Dr. Del Campo. "At times this can also be due to the location of the vessels and the eye muscles (close to the surface), which can cause discoloration," adds Dr. Boakye.