

Eye buys

Can nonprescription creams erase wrinkles? Our testers check them out.

They call them “smile lines,” but we’re not smiling. We’re spending. In hopes of erasing those little wrinkles around the eyes and elsewhere, Americans spend a lot more than \$600 million a year on nonprescription antiaging facial products. At Nordstrom or Neiman Marcus, you can shell out nearly \$100 for a container the size of your pinky. But when we tested antiwrinkle eye creams, we found that you can get the same results or possibly better for a fraction of that. One of the priciest creams was among the worst performers. Another interesting finding: Two of the better-performing products we tested aren’t sold in the U.S., though you can buy them online.

For our test, we selected 16 creams ranging in price from \$15 to \$95 that are claimed to reduce the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines around



FINISH LINES Some people who used our top creams wound up with visibly fewer eye wrinkles.

the eyes. Many also are claimed to diminish dark undereye circles, bags, or puffiness. We sent our secret shoppers to department stores, drugstores, and other retailers to buy the items. We tested the creams to see how well they handled wrinkles, and we asked users whether they thought the products helped lessen dark circles or bags. Ten of the products came from U.S. stores; six were purchased in

Europe. The full list of products is on the next page.

To see how well the creams worked at reducing wrinkles, we enlisted 107 men and women between the ages of 35 and 65 who used two creams—one around each eye—each morning and night for six weeks. (For comparison we included in the test two facial moisturizers that are not claimed to reduce wrinkles.) →

7 WAYS TO PREVENT EYE WRINKLES

Some people are genetically lucky and have skin that’s somewhat less prone to age-related wrinkling. But if you like to bake in the sun, smoke, or engage in other skin-damaging activities, even the strongest genes can’t protect you. And as skin ages, it becomes thinner and less resilient. Ultraviolet light damages collagen and causes fine lines and wrinkles, not to mention contributing to skin cancer. Here’s how to help prevent those lines or keep them from getting deeper.

- Use a daily facial moisturizer with at least 30 SPF to limit ongoing sun damage. Sorry! As far as we know, no formal studies show that using antiwrinkle eye creams at a young

age can prevent lines from forming in the first place.)

- Shield your face with a hat and sunglasses when you’re outdoors. The bigger the shades, the better.
- Never get into a tanning bed. Those UV rays can be even more intense than the sun’s.
- Don’t smoke.
- Try not to rub your eyes. Treat allergies so you’re not itchy and tempted to rub.
- Sleep on your back. Mashing your face into the pillow can cause lines to form over time.
- Get an annual eye exam. If you can’t see clearly, you’re likely to squint, which can create wrinkles.

We removed identifying details from the packages so nobody knew what they were testing. Using a superhigh-resolution camera we snapped pictures of each person's eyes before the test, an hour after first applying the cream, and after six weeks. Without knowing which picture was which, our in-house sensory panelists took a close look

at the photos and scored the length and depth of visible wrinkles using a four-point scale, from 0 (no improvement) to 3 (a visible reduction in wrinkles). We also asked the participants what they liked or disliked about the products. **The bottom line:** Some creams performed better than others, but

changes were subtle. None of them came close to eliminating wrinkles. Our test was only six weeks long, so we don't know if using the creams longer would yield more dramatic results. But the truth is you can't buy a face-lift in a bottle. For information about antiwrinkle treatments a doctor can offer, see Quick Consult at right.

Antiwrinkle eye creams worth a try



L'ORÉAL PARIS DERMO-EXPERTISE REVITALIFT DOUBLE LIFTING EYE CREAM
Price \$41

Fragrance Very light floral with an earthy undertone
Why we like it This eye cream, bought in England, had a nice cooling sensation, test subjects said. They also liked that it felt light and natural on their skin, leaving it feeling soft and moisturized with no residue. This product has an unusual design, a pump that squirts out two ribbons—a pink gel and a white cream—that mix together when dispensed.
Where to get it www.chemistdirect.com.au (price includes shipping)



NIVEA VISAGE ANTI-RIDES Q10 PLUS SOIN CONTOUR DE L'OEIL AVEC FILTRES UVA/UVB
Price \$34

Fragrance Virtually none
Why we like it This cream, bought in France, was among our better performers. Participants said it felt lightweight and made their skin softer and moisturized. Unlike most we tested, it includes sunblocking ingredients, a nice bonus. Nine out of 11 testers thought it improved the dark circles under their eyes. Eight said they'd buy it again, more than any other cream we tested.
Where to get it www.amazon.co.uk (price includes shipping)



DR. BRANDT LINELESS EYE CREAM
Price \$60

Fragrance A hint of floral aroma
Why we like it Our test subjects also gave this product props for leaving their skin feeling moisturized and soft. The package promises the product will help reduce puffiness, but people didn't notice any big improvement. And while there's no specific promise to reduce dark circles, nine of 11 users said their undereye circles appeared less noticeable.
Where to get it Sephora, Sephora.com, www.drbrandtskincare.com



OLAY TOTAL EFFECTS 7-IN-1 ANTI-AGING BOOSTER EYE TRANSFORMING CREAM
Price \$20

Fragrance Virtually none
Why we like it Two words: awesome value. This drugstore staple smoothed wrinkles and fine lines about as well as our other top picks. It's also easy to find at local stores. And study participants liked how light and natural it felt on their skin and how it was quickly absorbed. (Olay was among the better performers in our 2007 tests of facial wrinkle creams, too.)
Where to get it Drugstores, supermarkets, discount stores, online

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all products are creams and come in a 15-milliliter container.

Others we tested

These middle-of-the-pack eye creams didn't make our Smart Picks list. Unless otherwise noted, contents are about 15 milliliters.

- Clinique Repairwear Intensive Eye Cream, \$39
- L'Oréal Paris Dermo-Expertise Advanced Revitalift Eye Anti-Wrinkle & Firming Eye Cream, \$17
- Garnier Nutritioniste Nutrition + Dermatology Ultra-Lift Anti-Wrinkle Firming Eye Cream, \$15
- Avon Anew Rejuvenate 24 Hour Eye Moisturizer with SPF 25 Day/Night Cream (10 milliliters), \$30
- StriVectin-SD Eye Cream (38 milliliters), \$59
- Logona Naturkosmetik Age Protection Gel Contour Des Yeux Soin Leger, Rafrachissant (gel; 20 milliliters), \$38
- Clarins Advanced Extra-Firming Eye Contour Cream (20 milliliters), \$58
- Boots No. 7 Protect & Perfect Eye Cream, \$20
- Garnier Skin Naturals UltraLIFT Anti-Wrinkle Firming Eye Cream, \$33

:(NOT SO HOT

- ROC RETIN-OX INTENSIVE ANTI-WRINKLE CREAM, \$48
 - LANCÔME HIGH RESOLUTION EYE COLLASER-5X (SERUM), \$59
 - PERRICONE MD COSMECEUTICALS ADVANCE EYE AREA THERAPY, \$95
- The ROC and the Lancôme were the least effective creams we tried. The Perricone MD reduced wrinkles as well as the middle-of-the-pack creams, but cost a whole lot more. Some of our sensory panelists said the product smelled a bit like a used gym bag, sweaty socks, or fermented fruit!

QUICK CONSULT



Jessica J. Krant, M.D., M.P.H., is a dermatologic surgeon in Scarsdale, N.Y.

Undereye creams help reduce lines, but I think I need more. What can a doctor do to zap wrinkles?

There are lots of ways that physicians can treat wrinkles around the eyes. But there are risks, which range from temporary irritation to scarring and even blindness. So be sure to find a board-certified dermatologist or plastic surgeon who is experienced in the techniques. Ask about which of these options might be best for your skin and your budget. She might recommend more than one.

Fractionated lasers and plasma resurfacing These new devices, which are less likely than older lasers to damage and scar delicate eyelid skin, either tighten the skin's collagen with heat or destroy it and allow it to regenerate over time. Fine lines and discoloration might also improve. Multiple treatments are often necessary.

Chemical peels Medium-depth trichloroacetic acid peels can take one to two weeks to heal and have a variable risk of scarring but offer noticeable improvement with repeated use.

Although they're not traditionally used on eyelids, alpha- and beta-hydroxy acid peels, like glycolic and salicylic acid peels, are another option, and they have no major recovery time. Avoid deep phenol peels, which are too aggressive for eyelids.

Botox When used properly it can help, but overuse or misplacement around the eyes can cause droopy, misshapen eyes with puffy bags and worse wrinkling.

Fillers Hyaluronic acid fillers carefully placed might help fill deeper lines or replace lost volume or hollows, but if they're put in the wrong place, they can create permanent lumps if too superficial or cause blindness from unintended entry into a blood vessel. Recovery time can be zero to a few days.

Surgery Blepharoplasty and forehead lifts can tighten lids with excess skin or droopy folds and raise the brow line. Canthopexy tightens and lifts the outer corner of the eye. Recovery time could be a couple of days to a few weeks.

Krant is also assistant professor of dermatology at SUNY Downstate Medical Center.

SURPRISE FINDING!

We put two moisturizers with no antiwrinkle claims in our test for comparison. One of them, a product bought in England called Simple Kind to the Skin (\$7, ShopLondons.com), worked as well as some of our Smart Picks. The other moisturizer came in near the bottom of our results.

