

Help! What to do about chin hairs, red eyes, hammertoes, and more

Medical experts tackle a fresh round of embarrassing beauty questions

Got a weird cosmetic concern that you're too squeamish to ask the doctor about? Yeah, so do we. Our last roundup of embarrassing beauty questions (published in May) didn't have enough space to address all of our insecurities, so we posed six more queries to dermatologists, plastic surgeons, and other pros.

How do I get rid of these thorny hairs on my chin?

Stray facial hairs are often caused by the drop in estrogen that happens during and after menopause, says Paradi Mirmirani, M.D., a board-certified dermatologist at Kaiser Permanente in Vallejo, Calif. Budget-friendly DIY options include

tweezing and bleaching—though Mirmirani warns that the former can cause ingrown hairs or other irritation. If you have a lot of stray hairs, ask your doctor about the prescription cream Vaniqa, which slows down the growth of facial hair and costs about \$110. Check your insurance to see whether it's covered.

Professional treatments include waxing or threading at a salon, which are temporary; and electrolysis or laser hair removal, which are permanent. What's best for you depends on the hairiness of your situation (sorry). Electrolysis is fine if you have only a few unwanted hairs because it targets one strand at a time. Laser removal is better for large amounts of hair, but it works only on dark hair. Expect to pay about \$60 to \$80 an hour for electrolysis and more for laser removal. Will it hurt? Both procedures "feel like the snap of a rubber band," Mirmirani says.

of medicine at New York Medical College. One of his patients complained about pitted nails, which ended up being psoriasis. Pale, spoon-shaped nails can indicate iron-deficient anemia, and ridges might be a sign of thyroid disease. See a doctor to make sure you're not dealing with an underlying health problem. Otherwise, symptoms might just stem from age or exposure to water—your nails' biggest enemy (seriously!). Wear cotton-lined gloves when washing dishes, and try not to linger in the shower. Purported nail strengtheners such as biotin, gelatin, and calcium aren't worth the money because little evidence backs up their claims, Lipman says.

Why are my eyes so bloodshot?

Bloodshot eyes appear red because the vessels in the white surface area become enlarged and irritated. Many things can cause that, including smoking, contact lenses, allergies, sun, pollution, dryness, infection, and trauma, explains Thomas L. Steinemann, M.D., a professor of ophthalmology at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. He suggests over-the-counter artificial tears or a lubricating eye ointment or gel to keep eyes moist. For redness due to allergies, try a cool compress; if dryness is the problem, use a warm one. Don't use drops that are claimed to get the red out or shrink blood vessels, or that contain decongestants. "You can get rebound redness once you stop using them," Steinemann warns. If the problem is persistent, make an appointment with an eye doctor. You can find more information at eyesmart.org.





I have these annoying hoods over my eyes and am contemplating an eye-lift. How much does it cost?

How much you'll pay for eye-lift surgery, or blepharoplasty, might depend on whether you're just looking a little tired or you've got shar-pei-like skin flaps in your eyes. Michele Shermak, M.D., a board-certified plastic surgeon in Baltimore, says that when a person comes in with droopy lids, she has patients get a visual field test to see whether their eyelids are partially blocking their vision. If so, insurance may cover the cost of the lift. But more often patients simply want to reverse the effects of genetics and aging. In those cases, you'll generally have to pay out of pocket. The average fee for eyelid surgery is about \$2,800, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. Choose a board-certified plastic surgeon. (Search for surgeons in your area at the ASPS website, at plasticsurgery.org.) Shermak suggests looking at prospective surgeons' websites to see examples of their work and consulting several before you make a decision. Side effects of the surgery include temporary dry eyes and scarring. Vision damage is extremely rare.

I have ugly hammertoes! Did I do something to cause them—and what can I do about it?

Blame it on years of wearing those fabulous too-high, too-tight shoes, says Carol Frey, M.D., an assistant clinical professor of orthopedic surgery at the University of California at Los Angeles, who adds that 90 percent of people with hammertoes are women. "This is the modern form of foot binding," Frey says. "After a few years, the foot will begin to take on the shape of the shoe." To remedy the problem, the first step is, gulp, to kiss those 4-inch heels with the pointy toes goodbye. Choose sandals or shoes that have a deep, roomy toe box and are made of soft leather. Heels should be no higher than 2 inches. When at home, go barefoot to give your feet a break from the constriction of shoes. You can also do gentle stretches and exercises to improve the strength of your toes, such as picking up marbles or crunching a towel. Other things that can help include pads and splints, a shoe orthotic, and a straightener to help realign the bent toe (ask your doctor or buy one at the drugstore or online). But if the toe has become rigid and painful, you might need surgery to get your tootsy straightened out.

I fantasize about getting liposuction on my saddlebag thighs. But I've heard the fat will just come back somewhere else. Is that true?

Yes, if you gain weight after having liposuction, says Paul R. Weiss, M.D., a spokesman for the American Society of Plastic Surgeons and clinical professor of plastic surgery at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, N.Y. Liposuction removes fat cells from your thighs, so if you gain weight after your surgery, it might show up in other spots, such as your stomach

and hips. "Liposuction, in general, is not a way to lose weight," Weiss says. "It's a way to fine-tune the various contours of the body." He adds that obese people are usually not candidates for liposuction. And if you gain enough weight, Weiss says, you can expect to get bigger in all the usual trouble spots—even those thighs you thought you were rid of.



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