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Puffy Eyes

by Kathryn Khadija Leverette, L.E.

Eye puffiness is caused by excess fluid that has collected in the orbital eye area, an indicator of one or more underlying causes. In most cases, this problem will resolve either on its own or after simple self-help treatments and lifestyle changes. Since puffy eyes can be a symptom of more serious eye conditions and health problems, chronic swelling should be assessed by a physician.

1 Lack of sleep and sleeping flat can allow fluid to accumulate in the eye area. Contributing factors include a bad mattress, sleep disorders, sleep apnea, mid-life hormone changes, sleeping with infants and small children, poor late night time management, jet lag, graveyard-shift jobs, and interrupted daytime sleep. Clients should sleep on their back with their upper body slightly elevated. This posture allows fluids to drain from their face. They should also create a consistent bedtime routine and aim for seven to eight hours of uninterrupted sleep on a consistent basis.



2 Crying, rubbing, contact lenses, eyelash glue, mascara, frosted eyeshadow, expired makeup, eyelash enhancement serums, overuse of potent steroid creams, acne washes and exfoliating cleansers rinsed over the eyes, and scented laundry, hair, and skin care products can irritate the eyes. Have clients pay close attention to their symptoms, when they occur, and what they are doing at the time. They should change their contact lenses often and keep them clean, switch to matte eye shadows and fragrance-free products, replace mascara every three months and never share, and apply topical medications and skin care products exactly as directed. They should also keep acne medications and cleansers away from the eye area and refrain from wearing benzoyl peroxide if they expect to be in the sun or perspire.



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3 Swelling can be caused by dermatitis, dry eye, blepharitis, conjunctivitis, styes, and other more serious eye infections. Clients should see a physician if the condition persists for more than a few days.



4 Allergies afflict both adults and children and run in families. They can cause swelling, tearing, wiping, rubbing, blotting, and scratching of the eye area. Failure to address specific allergens that trigger attacks contribute to puffy eyes. Clients need to gain control of their allergies by taking a non-drowsy antihistamine and using a saline sinus rinse twice a day. They should also avoid common culprits – like fragrances, dust, smoke, scented laundry products, pet dander, dust mites, and foods – wear a dust mask for household chores and yardwork, and keep the car's ventilation system on circulate rather than intaking air from the outside to prevent dust, pollen, and particulate pollutants from getting into the eyes, nose, and lungs. It is also best for them to avoid smoking.



5 Inflammation of eye tissue can cause watering, redness, light sensitivity, swelling, and eyelid retraction. In Graves' disease, swelling of tissue in the eye socket can push the eye forward, causing the eye to swell and bulge. Have clients make an appointment with an endocrinologist for diagnosis and treatment to restore thyroid function and treat thyroid eye disease. Also, avoid inflammatory foods such as white potatoes, tomatoes, tomatillos, bell peppers, eggplants, and goji berries.



6 One of the most effective and least expensive remedies for swollen eyes is a cold compress. The cold helps to constrict blood vessels and reduce edema. Various combinations of peptides, antioxidants, quercetin, retinol, cucumber extract, hyaluronic acid, white tea, yeast, caffeine, alpha lipoic acid, DMAE, vitamin C, and botanical brighteners can also work to hydrate, calm, and brighten puffy under-eyes, especially if they are cold before use. Facial microcurrent treatments can also help tighten puffy skin, but the results are temporary unless performed often. Other remedies include massage, cold wet tea bags, chilled cucumber slices, raw grated potatoes, egg white masks, coffee grounds, cold spoons, frozen peas, and iced milk compresses.



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7 Sodium-rich foods include salty snacks, soups, fast food, ramen noodles, processed foods, dairy, artificial sweetener, seaweed, sports drinks, and more. Clients can try switching to a low carbohydrate diet with fewer processed foods and stop consuming dairy. Dairy is linked to allergies, water retention, bloating, puffy eyes, acne, and other health problems.



10 Inadequate water intake causes dehydration and water retention, which can lead to puffy eyes, dark circles, bloating, dry skin and scalp, uneven skin tone, and more. Clients can eliminate or cut back on known offenders, increase water intake, and be consistent. They should drink enough water to equal half their weight in ounces. For every dehydrating beverage and salty meal, drink extra water. Clients should increase their water intake if they take medications like prednisone, which cause severe puffiness.

8 Sun exposure, sunburn, windburn, exposure to indoor heat sources, and photodermatitis caused by a combination of sun and medication can lead to swelling in the orbital eye area. Have clients apply physical sunscreen and wear ultraviolet-protective sunglasses, even on overcast days. Lightly tinted sunglasses in the evening protect the eyes from wind-borne debris, dust, and pollutants.



9 As people age, the tissues around their eyes weaken, a process that is accelerated by sun exposure, alcohol, smoking, and rubbing. Genetic fat deposits under the eyes can appear in youth and gradually worsen with age. For this factor, clients can have a plastic surgeon perform a transconjunctival blepharoplasty to address excess fat through an incision placed inside the lower eyelid.



The highest recommended combination is getting good night's sleep with the upper body elevated, drinking 80 ounces of water a day, controlling allergies, cutting back on salt and alcohol, not smoking, wearing sunglasses, and applying cold compresses as needed.



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