



# EYE SPY

*Tracey Strange sharpens her focus on the beauty benefits of a good eye cream.*

**W**hen casting an eye on the future, an eye cream is a good investment.

“The importance of moisturising the skin can’t be emphasised enough,” says Auckland cosmetic physician Teresa Cattin. “Moisturisers play an extremely important role in the treatment of all ageing skin, including the thinner and more sensitive area around the eye.”

Dry skin, she explains, results from a lack of moisture in the stratum corneum – or the outermost layer of the epidermis. Mostly made up

of dead or peeling cells, the stratum corneum can easily become cracked or dry and show visible signs of ageing, such as fine lines and wrinkles.

“Water is kept in the skin by sebum,” says Dr Cattin. “But as we age, our production of natural oil decreases. Creams, gels or serums that help seal in moisture therefore, are going to be really useful in terms of making the skin look better. They also help to protect it from the environment, which plays a part in dehydration.”

If the eye cream is thicker, does it lock in moisture more effectively? Not necessarily, says Dr Cattin. “Thicker

creams are often basic emollients, which get between dry and shedding skin cells, much like a filler. While the skin around the eye will feel smoother, these products are not actually moisturising at all, they’re just sitting on the outer layers of the dermis.”

According to Dr Cattin, there are two basic types of effective moisturiser: humectant and occlusive. Occlusive moisturisers prevent water loss from the epidermis, keeping the skin from dehydrating and maintaining its effectiveness as a barrier to infection. The purest forms of occlusive moisturisers are oils, or serums, and are most commonly made of mineral and vegetable oils or silicone.

Humectants attract moisture from the atmosphere and help the skin retain it. They contain ingredients such as glycerin, propylene glycol and sorbitol.

As a general rule, face creams shouldn’t be used around the eye because they often contain active ingredients that are too strong for fragile skin. But, you should also be cautious about your choice of eye product. Creams and lotions are the result of emulsifying water and oil, says Dr Cattin.

“Some, however, can be ‘over occlusive’ and may block hair follicles, forming pustules or aggravating acne. In the delicate skin around the eye, tiny white bumps or cysts, known as milia, may form – usually a sign the product is too heavy, preventing the normal process of sloughing off dead surface cells.”

Oils or serums, she says, are good for the eye area because they usually contain smaller particles than creams and lotions and are therefore more easily absorbed. So, where do eye gels fit in? They play piggy-in-the-middle,

sharing some properties with liquids, some with creams. “I’m very keen on gels,” says Dr Cattin. “They are a very good delivery system. Ingredients can be suspended in the gel, the gel evaporates to leave the pure ingredient.

“In the end, it comes down to personal choice,” she says. “If you are not seeing an improvement in the appearance of tiny lines, or if you have hard white bumps around the orbital area, chances are the product isn’t working for you.”

## MILIA MATTERS

Milia look like tiny hard whiteheads and occur when dead, normally sloughed off, skin cells become trapped in small pockets at the skin’s surface. Common in newborns, they also occur in adults. But unlike in babies, where they generally disappear naturally, milia in adults can stick around for a long time, sometimes indefinitely. They can be prevented with regular exfoliation and by avoiding face creams that are too thick. Microdermabrasion and glycolic peels are two ways of getting rid of them. Digging them out is not recommended because of the risk of scarring.

The most common ingredients in wrinkle creams, according to America’s prestigious Mayo Clinic, are:

## VITAMIN A, OR RETINOL

The first antioxidant to be widely used in wrinkle creams, retinol – a vitamin A derivative – has been a sensation. Widely regarded as effective, it is said to work below the skin’s surface, neutralising wrinkle-causing free radicals. Retinol concentration varies from

product to product, so don't apply a vitamin A face cream around the eye area. Stick to specialist products such as Dermo-Expertise RevitaLift Eye Anti-Wrinkle and Firming Cream, \$32.99, and Shiseido Revital Wrinkle Lift AA, \$144.

**HYDROXY ACIDS**

Alpha hydroxy acids, derived

*Antioxidant and anti-inflammatory, tea compounds are linked to the prevention of skin cancer and sun damage.*

from sugar-containing fruit, not only attract moisture to the skin but also act as exfoliants, sloughing dead cells to reveal the fresher, younger-looking skin underneath and encouraging regeneration. They stimulate the production of collagen but, in concentrated doses, can cause side effects, such as burning and itching, and have been linked to increased sun sensitivity. Once again, choose a specialist eye product, such as Neutrogena Healthy Skin Eye Cream, \$23.95, for use around the orbital area or Philosophy's Eye Believe High-Performance Eye Cream, \$65.

**ALPHA-LIPOIC ACID (ALA)**

Another antioxidant, ALA penetrates skin membranes to fight free radicals and increases the effectiveness of supplements such as vitamins C and E. It also plays a hand in smoothing skin irregularities, such as brown spots.

**COENZYME Q-10**

A nutrient that helps regulate energy production in cells, it improves the body's ability to fight wrinkles. Studies show that pre-sun application protects against damage. Try Freeze 24/7 Anti-Ageing Eye Serum, \$xxx, and Nivea Visage Q10 Plus Wrinkle Control Eye Creme, \$xxx.

**COPPER PEPTIDES**

Copper is a trace element found in every cell. When combined with small protein fragments (the peptides) it can enhance wound healing, improve antioxidant action and stimulate collagen production. It is also linked to improved skin elasticity and hydration. Product match: Neutrogena Visibly Firm Eye Cream with Active Copper, \$32.95, and a product new to the local market which has had sensational press overseas, StriVectin Eye Cream, \$295 (launches soon).

**GROWTH FACTORS**

Naturally occurring hormones found in plants, growth factors act as chemical messages between cells. Kinetin, most often used in cosmetics, is claimed to reduce wrinkles and pigmentation, stimulate collagen and fight free radicals. Try Almay Kinetin Skincare Rejuvenating Eye Treatment, \$38.

**SOY ISOFLAVONES**

Isoflavones are the oestrogen-like substances found in the protein extracts of soybeans and soymilk. They are said to protect the skin against sun damage, lighten age spots and increase production of hyaluronic acid, a highly effective hydrating substance. Try Murad Resurgence Renewing Eye Cream, \$158, and Clinique Deep Wrinkle Concentrate for Face and Eye, \$148.

**TEA EXTRACTS**

Antioxidant and anti-inflammatory, tea compounds are linked to the prevention of skin cancer and sun damage. Green tea, most commonly found in cosmetics, helps to prevent wrinkles and repair sun damage. Product match: Origins Eye Doctor Moisture Care For Skin Around the Eyes, \$70, Clinique Moisture Surge Extra Refreshing Eye Gel, \$65, and FaceWorks Green Tea Eye Serum, \$28.

**VITAMIN C**

Vitamin C is not only a powerful antioxidant, it also helps recycle vitamin E and promote collagen formation. Topical vitamin C is also claimed to reduce wrinkles, thicken skin and protect against sun damage. But it degrades rapidly as soon as it comes into contact with the atmosphere, which is why the first topical vitamin C products weren't thought to be very effective. Newer products however, are more absorbent. Try Cellex-C Eye

**AN EYE ON UV**

Sun is the biggest contributor to wrinkles, but should we apply sunblock to the sensitive eye area? "I would if it was a natural sunscreen," says skin expert Teresa Cattin. (Natural products contain ingredients such as titanium dioxide or zinc.) But there is a dermatological proviso: "I wouldn't apply it to the eyelid or up to the lower lash line, but around the orbital area is fine."

Contour Cream Plus, \$159, and Estée Lauder Resilience Lift Extreme Ultra Firming Eye Creme, \$102, or Re-Nutriv Revitalizing Comfort Eye Creme, \$128.

**VITAMIN E**

Declining levels of this antioxidant in the skin are associated with wrinkles. Tocopherols and tocopherol acetate are the most common forms of vitamin E found in cosmetics and are linked to a reduction in wrinkles, wrinkle length and depth and skin roughness. Try Napoleon Perdis Auto Pilot Eye Spy Eye Cream and Primer, \$70, and Trilogy Rosehip Oil Eye Contour Cream, \$42.95.

FQ

