Up to 40 percent of the U.S. population suffers from itchy and watery eyes. Seasonal allergy symptoms experienced in the eye area can result in practical problems such as extreme sensitivity to bright light, blurry vision and an annoying desire to rub your eyes.

Many allergy patients also experience darkness and/or swelling underneath one or both eyes. This is known as “allergic shiners,” and is simply the result of congestion in the sinuses that slightly affect ones blood flow. Some of the smaller blood vessels beneath the skin may enlarge and show up as darkness (often purplish) right under the eyes.

My female patients try to remedy this situation by using facial cosmetics, such as concealers and foundation, as a cover-up to the puffiness and dark circles.

But, upon medical examinations, we often find that our patients’ have allergic sensitivities to the very eye make-up they are using to try and look better. Mascara and eyeliner in particular make the allergic shiner worse, rather than fixing the problem.

Other hygienic products that may worsen one’s allergic shiner include hair care products, facial moisturizers and products containing fragrances.

In-office allergy patch tests can easily identify if contact dermatitis, or skin allergies, are present, and may explain the puffiness, redness and irritated eyelids.
The next step, after removing irritant eye make-ups and creams, is to look for specific solutions to treat the allergy or sinus disease. Of course, dehydration, lack of sleep and familial facial characteristics may contribute to ones unfavorable physical appearance. Many of us tend to have more puffiness around the eyes upon wakening, as a result of the horizontal or recumbent sleeping position in which fluid has accumulated, and will subsequently diminish during the day.

Another indicator may be one’s amount of salt intake, which can contribute to the retention of fluid within and around your lids. Low-tech treatments such as “cool” compresses around your eyelids will help reduce swelling and residual daytime puffiness.

Bottom-line: Visit your doctor to have a diagnosis confirmed. A simple in-office allergy test can help pinpoint whether you have seasonal or indoor allergies. Second, many allergy patients benefit from prescription antihistamine eye drops as well as oral antihistamines. Last, a sinus evaluation can also detect inflamed or blocked sinus passages that require appropriate remedies.

After you complete these steps you will be on your way to feeling better and having younger-looking eyes.

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