



**Lock down:** "If I need a lot of control, I put Warren-Tricomi PureStrength calming serum in my hair before I dry it," says Diana Petroff. "Works like a charm."



# MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION

You may think you know how to get mile-long lashes or silky-smooth hair, but compared with the women who've spent their lives focused on a single beauty issue, you're a novice. America's aesthetic autodidacts (and a few pros) share their secrets with Megan Deem

**W**e all know exactly who they are. They're the fellow picnickers pulling their hair straight under the public restroom's hand dryer, worried that the humidity is making them go frizzy around the hairline. Or the passenger once caught smuggling tweezers onto the airplane because the "light in the bathroom is perfect for plucking brows." They may seem crazy, but deep down you know that if you want to make your blow-out last through the weekend, you ask the friend who's been straightening her wavy strands by hand daily for the past 15 years.

## FRIZZ-FREE HAIR

Air traffic controllers don't pay as much attention to the weather in America's cities as Manhattan writer Diana Petroff, 31. "I spent an hour in Maui blow-drying my hair perfectly straight and then went outside and it curled up immediately," she says. "Now I don't go to Hawaii." Petroff rates other travel locations based on how her hair (naturally "a cross between a poodle and Ziggy Marley") reacts. Low-humidity zones, such as Los Angeles, Vermont, and Colorado ("as long as it's not snowing") get the thumbs-up. "I'll visit Florida if a lot of friends are going, but I'll be anxious," she says.

In the hazy days of spring and summer, Petroff prepares by standing in front of the air conditioner before leaving her apartment. "The cold air calms and chills hair, reducing your chance of going from smooth to frizzy," she says. "I hate hairspray, but I mist a little Matrix Sleek.look lockout spray over my hair just to hold it until I get to work and in the air conditioning again." A blow-out connoisseur, Petroff says the keys to glossy perfection are a lot of heat when hair is wet ("everyone is using the T3 dryer now") and enough strength to pull hair straight on a round brush. "All the salons that really know how to defrizz hair use the Ariel 205 wooden brush from Italy," she says. "It has a better grip and bristles. You truly do not need to flat-iron if you have the right tools and products."

With her Japanese and African-American heritage, Titi Branch, co-owner of Curve Salon in Brooklyn, knows frizz firsthand. Four times a year, she gets a chemical process called "the silkener" to calm and elongate her own tight curls. Branch also believes that cut is important. "No matter what, avoid razors and thinning, which can cause flyaways," she says. "Girls with highly textured hair need a few long layers that come to the chin, at least."

One 30-year-old New Yorker who wishes to remain anonymous lest her private-banking colleagues discover the depth of her obsession showers in lukewarm water ("no steam") with her hair covered. She also uses a fabric-wrapped, circa-1990 scrunchie instead of rubber bands ("they cause kinks") and says that in a pinch, a towel turban makes a marvelous shower cap.

Most of the frizz-fixated women we spoke with swear by the Kérastase Oléo-Relax line. "The shampoo and conditioner are fabulous," says Hania Jarrah, 31, who recently transferred to steamy Atlanta for a job with Turner Broadcasting. "They're a little oily, but they do a much better job of taming my thick, curly hair than anything else I've used."

Petroff applies Kérastase Oléo-Relax Serum to her wet hair "to remove any possibility of frizz." Also popular with the blow-dryer-and-brush set is the Japanese-made Nigelle DS Treatment Tender Feel conditioner. "It turns brittle, abused hair into silk," Petroff says.



PHOTOGRAPHED BY THIEMO SANDER

WWW.ELLE.COM

ELLE 323





**Defense strategy:**  
Eliza Brow Shaper

## PERFECTLY SHAPED BROWS

"Because I wear my hair back, the shape of my eyebrows is of paramount importance to me," says Nadine Kim, 26, a hedge fund associate in Manhattan who has her brows threaded monthly and tweezes them every three days. "I always exfoliate the area first with a gentle scrub like Bioré. It makes the hairs easier to grab."

According to Ji Baek, owner of Manhattan's Rescue Beauty Lounge, some clients have standing weekly appointments for arch maintenance. "We had one woman who plucked her brows until she had four hairs left. I told her to hand over her tweezers and cut bangs," Baek says. "It took five months, but her brows eventually returned. You can help stimulate hair growth by massaging with a soft toothbrush—it increases circulation."

Although she sees some clients every other week, Eliza Petrescu, brow doyenne of Manhattan's Avon Salon & Spa, swears that monthly visits are enough to ensure perfect arches. She's aware that there are those who can't resist touch-ups in between, however, and outlines some DIY rules: "Never tweeze above the brow, only pluck outside the first or second row of new growth, and remove hairs above the middle of the nose, in an area the width of your index finger."

For the tweezer-happy who may have gone overboard, Taryn Ross, 29, the London-based founder of the nightlife and culture website [www.urbanjunkies.com](http://www.urbanjunkies.com), offers some firsthand advice: "The Eliza brow gel does a brilliant job of giving shape by gluing remaining hairs in place."

## NO MORE DARK CIRCLES

"I've been using concealer on my undereye circles since I was 10," says 26-year-old Yale University behavioral marketing doctoral student Kelly Goldsmith of New Haven, Connecticut. "I'm from L.A., and I will not relinquish my vanity, even though now I work 80 hours a week and just bounce from library to library all day." (For the record, Goldsmith prefers Stila Eye Concealer: "It's thick, goes on smooth, and does the job.")

Kelly Moran, a 35-year-old management consultant in Redondo Beach, California, wasn't plagued by undereye discoloration until five years ago. "I find that the slightly peachy tone of Lancôme Aquatique eye base does a really good job of hiding circles," she says. "I like the consistency and the staying power, and it doesn't dry out your skin."

The eye cream with the most buzz is the peptide-heavy Hylexin. "I started using it two weeks ago, and it has already started to work," says Elizabeth Jenkins, a 31-year-old freelance fashion designer in New York City.

"I heard of Hylexin from a friend who raved about it," Moran says. "That made me want to try it."

However, Miami dermatologist Fredric Brandt, MD, isn't certain that Hylexin is quite the miracle in a tube. "I haven't seen any independent studies showing the product does what it claims," he says.

"I've had patients swear that eliminating dairy from their diet got rid of their undereye darkness," says NYC dermatologist Dennis Gross, MD. "Maybe it's related to some sort of milk protein, although there's no data to support that." Circles can be caused by melanin deposits or papery skin that shows blood vessels underneath. Lasers risk causing hyperpigmentation on the delicate tissue, so doctors suggest lightening agents like kojic acid (in Gross's MD Skincare Lift & Lighten Eye Cream, as well as Peter Thomas Roth AHA/Kojic Under Eye Brightener) to break up the melanin as hydroquinone may be too harsh for this area. If the problem stems from thin skin, hyaluronic acid injections are another way to cover the vessels.



**Eyes on the prize:** (From top) Hylexin; Lancôme Aquatique Waterproof Eye Colour Base



## FRINGE BEHAVIOR

One woman plumbs the depth of her obsession

Everyone has a moment that changes her life. Normally these are inarguably large—first love, first loss. For me, it was the first day I was home alone, at age nine. The second my mom left, I dashed to her makeup drawer and gorged my lashes on her purple mascara.

I'm a lash freak, and since my initial fix 17 years ago, I've been zealously pumping up what sparse blond hairs I have. Mascara technology has certainly improved. Sticky formulas have been replaced with superior versions like my favorites: DiorShow and L'Oréal Paris Volume Shocking. The fat Dior brush gives you abundant lashes while L'Oréal's dual tube has a thickener and a mini comb so you get fullness plus über-separation. A similarly obsessed friend introduced me to clear Shiseido The Makeup Mascara Base, which you apply first. She swears that "lashes look 10 times thicker and really long." New York City makeup artist Charlie Green taught me to squish product at the lash base by wiggling the brush, then to comb the tips with a clean wand. "This outlines the eye without clumps," she says. "It's flirtatious, but not in-your-face."

Speaking of flirtations, I'd been entertaining the notion of eyelash extensions until NYC makeup artist Ramy Gafni told me about a client who had the synthetic hairs glued on several months in a row: "Her own eyelashes began to fall out." Lash loss? No thanks. I'll stick to those transformative tubes I fell in love with years ago. The brushes are called wands for a reason.—HILLARY KERR



**Batting 1,000:** (From left) DiorShow Mascara; Shiseido The Makeup Mascara Base; L'Oréal Paris Volume Shocking Mascara





**The fallout:**  
Temporary falsies  
are a better  
choice than semi-  
permanent exten-  
sions, which  
may cause  
lashes to break.



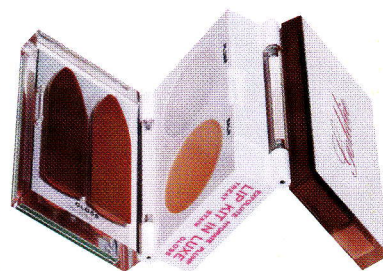
# SOFT, FULL LIPS

One of your obsessions could also be leading to one of your recurring problems. According to dermatologist Gross, the higher-than-average concentrations of fluoride and peroxide in whitening toothpastes can increase chapping. He tells patients to coat their lips with Vaseline before brushing to help prevent the ingredients from penetrating.

Smoothing flaky lips is "the hardest thing, tougher than erasing wrinkles," dermatologist Brandt says. "It happens to me too in New York City." When in dry climates, Brandt sleeps with a humidifier on and uses Aquaphor ointment. "It's more cosmetically appealing than other petrolatum-based products, and it spreads easily and has more moisturizing ingredients." One ELLE editor who took Accutane, the ultradehydrating prescription acne medicine, also swears Aquaphor was the only solution to her continually chapped lips—"and I tried at least 30 different things," she says.

When faced with a rough pucker, most people's first inclination is to scrub it smooth, with a toothbrush, washcloth, or other method. However, Brandt cautions against it. "You don't want to disrupt the barrier of skin that's already cracked because it could lead to greater problems." He suggests applying Catrix 10, a petrolatum-based ointment with anti-inflammatory ingredients sold in doctors' offices. "We normally give it to patients with red or irritated skin, but we found it works well for peeling the flakes off lips in a day," he says.

Dineh Mohajer's oral fixation started early. "I was probably eight when I was on vacation and saw a girl whose big lips I coveted, although it's only in the past 10 years that I've become obsessed," says the Goldie cosmetics cocreator, now 32. "I like for lips to be really soft." In a testament to her devotion, Mohajer developed the Goldie Lip Kit, which contains seven items—a plumper, clear balm, gentle apricot kernel-based exfoliator, three gloss shades, and one lip stain—in a package the size of two matchbooks. "Everyone used to talk about eyes, but now lips are the part of the face that we focus on most," she says.



**Pucker up:**  
(Clockwise from top)  
Goldie Lip Kit in Luxe;  
Aquaphor Healing Ointment; Catrix 10 Ointment



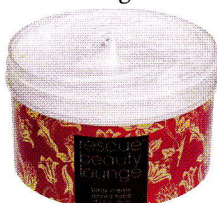
# BUTTERY SKIN

"Dryness dictates my entire routine," says New Yorker Laura Wells, 31, a technology reporter for the new ISNN cable network. "Eczema can make me itch so badly that I break blood vessels, so I have to be vigilant." Every month, Wells goes through one giant 12-ounce bottle of Nivea Body Extra Enriched Lotion. "I coat it on immediately after bathing and wait at least 30 minutes before dressing, but I sometimes still end up getting oil spots on my clothes," she says. "It happens with any lotion."

Spa owner Baek also suffers from the chronic skin irritation. "You're not supposed to take a lot of showers, but I do," she says. "I used to moisturize three times a day." Baek spent 24 months formulating her perfect body cream, Rescue Beauty Lounge's version, loaded with vitamin E. "Now I'm down to two," she says.

"Some of my patients have tried Crisco," Gross says. "It's certainly not the most elegant form of hydration." Another home remedy discussed in Gross's office: Slathering on moisturizer, then wrapping limbs in Saran Wrap before bed. "That's in old dermatology textbooks," he says. "Putting skin under occlusion increases ingredient efficacy."

Even those without a medical condition want to feel soft, of course. Half of the ELLE beauty department stays silky-limbed with Jergens Ultra Healing Intense Moisture lotion.



**Atomic balms:**  
(From left) Jergens Ultra Healing Intense Moisture Therapy; Rescue Beauty Lounge Spiced Floral Body Cream

# SPOT-FREE COMPLEXION

Ten years ago, Ruth Shere, 59, began a quest that only now appears to be coming to an end. The Miami-based developer went to see Brandt about a one-inch brown spot on her cheek. Because of concern that those early lasers might scar, Shere started with hydroquinone. "I've since tried microdermabrasion, Retin-A, Tri-Luma, and liquid nitrogen, among other things," she says. "Currently I'm going every three weeks for a targeted TCA peel, which is a strong acid. It will take a year before the spot is gone, but I can see an improvement."

According to Brandt, Shere's is an extreme situation. "Lasers remove brown spots in almost all cases, although darker skins can get postinflammatory hyperpigmentation, so we treat them more gradually," he says.

Larger pigmentation patches known as melasma can be triggered by the sun and hormones (melanocytes have estrogen receptors). Therefore, the condition can only be treated with a bleaching agent, like hydroquinone, which suppresses melanin production. One NYC woman applies EpiQuin Micro, a prescription hydroquinone, daily two weeks before she goes on any sun-soaked vacation to prevent a melasma relapse. "I consider it a freckle prophylactic," she says.

"It won't hurt to use hydroquinone for a couple of weeks," Brandt says. "But as with any drug, don't apply it regularly if you don't need it."

Intense pulsed light (IPL) works similarly to lasers, but uses a broad light spectrum, although some experts find its results aren't as good as lasers on the deepest patches. "I went to my derm for a chemical peel, which made my facial spots worse," says Cindy Barshop, owner of the Completely Bare spas, including the new Palm Beach branch. "After two months of biweekly IPL, they've almost disappeared. Now I'm doing it on my chest. That takes longer to heal—there's not as much fat." □



**Light source:**  
EpiQuin Micro

ALL STILL LIVES: JEFF MURRAY