



PRIMER

EYE EXPERTISE

The long and short of mascara brushes

It's common wisdom that different hairbrushes create varying looks. Surprisingly, the same is true of mascara brushes. "Unlike other cosmetics, mascara and its applicator work as a system, so it's nearly impossible to analyze a mascara without also analyzing the brush," says New York City makeup artist Jessica Liebeskind.



SMASHBOX Lash DNA, \$19, smashbox.com
This straight wand is short, making it easy to "nestle in and really work the lashes," Liebeskind says.



L'ORÉAL Voluminous Volume Building Original, \$8, *available at drugstores*. Liebeskind describes the brush as "the ultimate fluffy football shape."



MAYBELLINE Volum' Express with curved brush, \$7, *available at drugstores*. Delivers mascara evenly from inner to outer corner, Liebeskind says.



MAC Pro Lash, \$12, maccosmetics.com
"A bit of a hybrid between straight and fluffy," Liebeskind explains—good for definition and body.



SHOPPING BASKET

THE VITAMIN AISLE



More than half of American adults take vitamins, minerals, or other supplements. But unlike medications, these products are not reviewed for safety by a government agency before they hit shelves. Earlier this year, the U.S. Government Accountability Office issued a report recommending that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) be given greater authority to protect consumers.

The buyer "really needs to do homework," says Brent Bauer, a physician and the director of the Complementary and Integrative Medicine Program at the Mayo Clinic. "You can't just grab something off the shelf and know that you're getting what you need."

In addition to following commonsense guidelines—buying from larger, reputable companies, being wary of unknown purveyors on the Internet—consumers have some resources available.

United States Pharmacopeia is an independent, nonprofit organization that tests supplements for quality, purity, and potency and offers its "USP Verified" seal, above, to those that meet its requirements (usp.org/USPverified/dietarysupplements lists products that carry the seal). But USP review is voluntary and, although available to manufacturers worldwide for a fee, not all companies are willing to pay for testing.

Another group, ConsumerLab.com, also uses independent labs to analyze products. But the results are available to subscribers only, for a \$29.95 annual fee.

A more promising development, Bauer says, is the recent passage of the FDA's Current Good Manufacturing Practices, now being phased in. By 2010, FDA regulations will ensure that "what's on the label is in the bottle," Bauer says.

There are a number of variations, but most mascara brushes fall into one of three styles: straight, tapered, or curved.

STRAIGHT wands, which often feature tight, coarse bristles, are best for playing up individual lashes rather than making one sweeping stroke. "This style gives you more definition and a precise application, because it allows you to target specific areas—like the inner or outer corners," Liebeskind says.

TAPERED (or football-shaped) brushes, which usually have fluffy bristles, deliver a light, feathery coat. They are designed to give lashes body rather than provide definition.

CURVED brushes are good for anyone who is not very comfortable applying mascara. They make it easy to coat the lashes in one swoop.

HYBRID brushes can fulfill multiple jobs. A straight, fluffy brush, for example, can give lashes definition and volume.

Martha's pick


MARIO BADESCU
Cellufirm Drops

\$25, mariobadescu.com

Martha uses this firming serum—which contains collagen, vitamin E, and seaweed extract—after washing her face but before applying other moisturizers or makeup. The formula is hydrating without being greasy and is gentle enough to dab around the eye area (where it minimizes fine lines) in addition to the rest of the face and the neck.

SUN SPOTS 101

MEMORIES OF SUMMER VACATION may fade soon after your bags are unpacked. But if you were less-than-perfect with sunscreen, the brown spots you acquired might not go away as quickly.

There are ways to make them less noticeable, says Leslie Baumann, a dermatologist in Miami. The first step is to encourage the skin to generate new, unpigmented cells. You can do this by washing with an exfoliating scrub, using retinol products, or getting a chemical peel or a microdermabrasion treatment at a dermatologist's office.

The next step is to use a prescription or over-the-counter cream that contains a tyrosinase inhibitor (at the drugstore, look for products with hydroquinone, arbutin, or kojic acid). "They help block tyrosinase, which then blocks melanin production," Baumann says. She cautions that skin gets used to the products, making them less effective. It's best to use such creams for three months, take a month off, and then start again. Once brown spots are under control, Baumann recommends daily use of a cream that contains soy or niacinamide, both of which block melanin from getting into skin cells.



PHILOSOPHY A Pigment of Your Imagination SPF 18 (\$30, philosophy.com) contains kojic acid.

CANYON RANCH Your Transformation Protect UVA/UVB SPF 30 Facial Moisturizer (\$75, nordstrom.com) is made with nicotinic acid, a form of niacinamide.



AVEENO Positively Radiant Tinted Moisturizer SPF 30 (\$17, aveeno.com) includes soy extract.



FOOD SENSE

For the latest research on weight loss, we went to Frank Sacks, a professor at the Harvard School of Public Health and lead author of one of the largest-scale studies of diets, published earlier this year in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

What diets did you analyze?

The trial included 811 men and women who were divided into four diet groups: low fat, average protein; low fat, high protein; high fat, average protein; and high fat, high protein. All the plans were heart-healthy diets, and none included fewer than 1,200 calories per day.

So which plan won? Subjects lost an average of 13 pounds after six months and maintained an average loss of nine pounds after two years, regardless of which plan they followed.

Does that mean it doesn't matter what you eat? We tested only healthy diets, not ones that advocate eating as much as you want of some particular food. What we learned is that instead of latching onto a prescribed plan, successful dieters have to modify their behavior: eat smaller portions, cut out calorie-containing beverages, eliminate an evening snack, and increase physical activity. There's no magic formula; you simply need to eat less.

What's the message here?

Our results give people flexibility. They don't really have to focus on how much fat or carbohydrates they're eating. Just pick a healthy diet that you can stick with, and that will help you lose the most weight.

GLOSSARY

LABEL LANGUAGE

It's standard for beauty products to trumpet the ingredients they contain. But increasingly, many labels are playing up what's not in the bottle. It's hard to pin down what some of the claims mean," says Paula Begoun, author of *Don't Go to the Cosmetics Counter Without Me* (Beginning Press). Here are translations of a few phrases that are growing in popularity.

PHTHALATE-FREE Phthalates are used to make plastics flexible and stabilize fragrances. They are also suspected of disrupting the endocrine system. In the European Union, certain phthalates are prohibited for use in cosmetics, and health groups have called for similar restrictions in the United States. Last year, Congress banned the use of some phthalates in products for young children.

NO SYNTHETIC FRAGRANCES Nearly all cosmetics contain fragrance—if only to neutralize the often unpleasant smell of the product's raw materials. But some people are sensitive to synthetic scents. In addition, these blends are more likely to contain phthalates.

PARABEN-FREE Parabens are the most commonly used preservatives in cosmetic products. Their safety has been called into question in light of some evidence that they mimic estrogen. The FDA maintains that parabens have less estrogenic activity than the body's own estrogen and are safe for use in cosmetics. In products that do contain them, you'll find them listed as methylparaben, propylparaben, and butylparaben.