



EYE MAKEUP TRENDS AND EYE HEALTH



Staying aware of the latest beauty fads can help you educate your patients and safeguard their ocular health and vision.

BY JEN WADEMAN, OD

Mermaid core, sugar plum, Mob wife, siren eyes, doe eyes, doll eyes, cat eyes, fox eyes, puppy eyes, glossy lids, lash clusters, holographic glaze, at-home lash tinting, hacks to apply lash extensions, hacks to keep your eyes from watering, and how to's for natural lash growth—there's no shortage of eye beauty and cosmetic hacks, trends, and instructional videos. With more than 1 billion active users on TikTok,¹ more than 2 billion on Instagram,² 2.7 billion on YouTube,³ and 3 billion on Facebook,⁴ it's safe to assume some of the individuals trying these trends will end up in your office. Whether they're old hacks with new

names, revived trends circling back to the captivated masses, or brand-new ideas, some of them that involve the eyes pose a variety of potential risks.

There are way too many eye makeup trends to cover in this article, so I have chosen a few that I have found most interesting (or likely to cause problems for any of our patients who follow them).

EYE MAKEUP AND COSMETIC SOCIAL MEDIA TRENDS TO WATCH OUT FOR

Vaseline for Watery Eyes



This viral beauty hack allegedly prevents watery eyes from ruining makeup by using Vaseline

(aka petroleum jelly) along the waterline and corners of eyes.

This trend began last year on TikTok and has garnered more than 92 million views.² It has continued to make its rounds on just about every social media platform. And it works, being that petroleum jelly is a hydrophobic compound. It sits on top of the skin, forming a barrier to help prevent moisture evaporation. As an occlusive moisturizer, it also has a thick texture that forms a barrier to catch and divert tears, thus limiting makeup smudging and running.

I would imagine the first thing that probably came to your mind as an eye care provider was the meibomian glands. As someone who spends most days going to great lengths to explain to patients what the meibomian glands are and how they affect ocular surface disease, all I can think of is this trend's potential to clog those vital glands with petroleum jelly.

My second thought is the risk of infection, as petroleum jelly is not sterile, and people are putting it near the eye after the same container has been used for cracked lips, dry hands, feet, and undereye wrinkles. Dipping a finger in the petroleum jelly container and then touching the eye is simply unhygienic, potentially leading to cross-contamination and infection.

Lastly, continually putting

petroleum jelly close to the eye can cause the formation of milia (small, white bumps that appear on the skin around the eyes). Because the eyelid skin is very thin, it is even more prone to form milia with overuse of heavy occlusive products.

Using petroleum jelly is not an ideal long-term solution for those with watery eyes, although it might prove effective as a quick fix. Patients should be aware of the increased risk of infection, styes, and even milia. Moreover, watery eyes can be a sign of an underlying issue, such as meibomian gland dysfunction, dry eyes, a blocked tear duct, or allergies. Patients with ongoing watery eyes should seek true medical advice and treatment from an eye care provider to get to the root cause of this symptom.

Castor Oil



Most of us don't have to indulge in the world of social media to be familiar with the infatuation around castor oil. Over the years, I've answered plenty of questions about castor oil as a solution to get rid of a sty or, more recently, as a more natural way to grow eyelashes.

Castor oil is a thick, odorless oil derived from the *Ricinus communis* plant. Castor oil has long been revered as a miracle cure-all and OTC remedy with multiple applications and commercial value, acting as an emollient in cosmetics and personal care products, as well as a precursor for many different industrial chemicals, such as those found in cleansers, surface coatings, fuel, food additives, skin cleansers, and fragrances.³

Social media has catapulted castor oil into new popularity as a so-called "eye remedy" for eliminating eyeglasses, curing cataracts, fading floaters, and dismantling dry eye.⁴ I think we can skip over

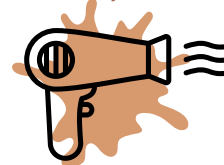
addressing the claims that castor oil cures cataracts and eliminates the need for eyeglasses, as they are highly questionable and without any scientific evidence. However, castor oil is far from useless when it comes to the eye. There is favorable evidence for its application and potential benefit in patients with dry eye and blepharitis.⁵ Because of its antiinflammatory, antimicrobial, and emollient properties, it is suggested that low concentrations of castor oil may help improve tear film stability and lipid layer thickness, keeping tears on the eye for longer.⁶ A small study in 2020 showed significant improvements in ocular surface symptoms in patients with blepharitis after using castor oil. Signs such as eyelid margin thickening, telangiectasia, cylindrical dandruff, and eyelash crusting were also shown to improve.⁷

The concentration of castor oil used in and around the eye should be cause for suspicion, as some literature suggests that higher concentrations may be toxic to the conjunctiva.⁸ Interestingly, castor oil is present (in lower concentrations) in some FDA-approved eye drops (eg, Refresh Optive Advanced Lubricant Eye Drops [Allergan, an AbbVie company], Refresh Optive Mega-3 Lubricant Eye Drops [Allergan, an AbbVie company]).⁹

Castor oil has also garnered more attention as a safer potential lash growth serum. Although the literature suggests that a proposed mechanism of castor oil, specifically ricinoleic acid, may play a role in lash growth,¹⁰ there is just not enough scientific evidence to substantiate these claims.

Although the use of castor oil is not a new trend, it is worth mentioning, as it continues to resurface. Patients should be advised against the use of OTC castor oil drops and provided precautions on their use, limitations, and benefits.

Blowdry Lashes Trend



This trend garnered a surprising 68 million views when it surfaced several years

ago and has recently seen a bit of a revival. Influencers across multiple social platforms have tested out this trend and documented their review of curling their eyelashes with a hair dryer. This beauty hack achieves its goal of curled and lifted eyelashes, but it may be at the expense of uncomfortable dryness, irritation, and even ocular surface abrasions. Can you say face palm?



Lash Tinting

Lash tinting is another form of eyelash enhancement, where a dye is used to darken the lashes to simulate

the look of mascara with semi-permanent effects. It's been making a resurgence on social media, with influencers documenting their DIY experience, using everything from eyelash tint kits to beard tint kits and hair dye.

As an eye care provider, it's easy to postulate the potential risks involved with using chemicals to dye your eyelashes at home, including blepharoconjunctivitis, contact dermatitis, edema of the lids, and periorbital dermatitis.¹¹⁻¹³ At-home DIY lash tinting is even more of concern for various other reasons, including questionable nondisclosed ingredients, improper use, products not appropriate for use around the eyes, and the potential for more severe complications.

Although many ingredients found in lash tints are not advisable to use around the eye, one ingredient commonly found in hair dye and beard tints, called P-Phenylenediamine (PPD), is not permitted to be used around the eye, according to the FDA. Some state

laws went as far as to ban lash tinting due to lack of FDA-approved dyes for use around the eye, but in 2022, the FDA amended its regulations to allow silver nitrate as a color additive in lash (and brow) tinting. Silver nitrate-based colorants achieve similar results to traditional hair tints but deposit color on the top of hair, rather than inside the cuticle, making it a safer option relative to PPD and, thus, approved by the FDA. However, there is some evidence that the “continued usage of the product and others like it may result in corneal and conjunctival argyrosis due to prolonged exposure to silver.”^{11,14}

PPD has a long, turbulent, and devastating past in eye care with its presence in cosmetics. Of note was its use in a lash and brow dye called Lash Lure in the 1930s, which was eventually banned, initiated by petitions and eventually leading to revisions to the regulation of cosmetics under the FDA. These changes were brought about after multiple adverse side effects, including one fatality, were traced to the use of PPD-laden lash and brow dye.

Patients should be advised of the potential risks with at-home lash tints. Recommend they have it done by a professional, if at all. Of course, the safest bet is to stick with mascara.

STAY IN THE KNOW AND SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

In the time it took you to read this article, several new eye makeup and beauty trends have likely flooded social media. Whether you are social media savvy or a novice to the world of online viral beauty trends, the dissemination of ideas, hacks, and how tos, especially when they involve eye health, leaves a lot to be sifted through and interpreted. As eye care providers, we can bridge the gap to better educate our patients and our community, whether in the exam room or online, on the role these trends may play in their overall eye health. ■

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