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TRUE *Lies*

Does tweezing your eyebrows really stop them from growing back? Discover the truth about 25 common beauty myths.

TEXT: LESLEY YOUNG

Beauty myths are like gossip: irresistible. (My favourite: Preparation H alleviates puffy eyes—hey, Christina Ricci and Gabrielle Union reportedly swear by it!) But while most rumours are harmless, following bad beauty advice can sometimes lead to unhealthy habits. ELLE examines the most popular beauty lore and separates fact from fiction.

Cucumber slices, cool wet tea bags and Preparation H reduce under-eye bags. FALSE. These tricks don't do a thing, says Dr. Peter Vignjevic, a dermatologist in Hamilton, Ont. "No one really knows what causes puffiness, but it's most likely an accumulation of excess fat," he says. "Unfortunately, surgical removal of the excess skin and fat [blepharoplasty] is the only thing that really works." He adds that topical products, like Biotherm Hydra-Detox Moisturizing Detox Gel for Under-eye Bags and Dark Circles (\$39.50), can offer a slight improvement.

Brushing your hair 100 strokes a night will keep it healthy and shiny. FALSE.

However, brushing with a pure-bristle brush spreads natural oils along the hair shaft, making your mane appear glossier, says John Steinberg, a hairstylist and the owner of John Steinberg & Associates in Toronto. As for how many strokes, it's up to you—a hundred isn't excessive if you use the right brush.

If you have oily skin, you don't need to moisturize. TRUE. You only need moisturizer if your skin feels tight and dry after washing, says Vignjevic. There is one exception, though: if you have combination skin, you need a non-comedogenic face cream, like Neutrogena Moisture for Combination Skin (\$17), which won't cause breakouts. >

4 You should never wax before or during your period. **TRUE.**

Hormonal changes just before and during ovulation may heighten the sensitivity of nerve endings, which means that waxing may be more painful, says Nicolette Oakwell-Morgan, a hair-removal expert at OMI Medical Inc. in Toronto. The best time for waxing is just after your period.

After highlighting or colouring your hair, wait two days before washing it to preserve the colour. **FALSE.** If you've had a salon colour treatment, you can wash your hair the next day, says Steinberg. But if you've gone the DIY route, follow the at-home kit instructions, which usually recommend waiting 24 hours or more. An at-home gloss, like John Frieda Luminous Color Glaze Clear Shine (\$15), will keep colour fresh between touch-ups.

6 You should never rub your wrists together when you apply fragrance. **TRUE.** According to Marian Bendeth, a fragrance expert and the owner of Sixth Scents in Toronto, this can "bruise" the oils contained in the blend, chemically altering the scent. "Leave it alone and let the air [dry] it," she says.

Shaving makes your hair grow back thicker. **FALSE.** However, it can appear that way, says Oakwell-Morgan. "When you shave, you're cutting hair off at its largest diameter, so you're left with the blunt end, which often feels coarser and thicker," she says.

You don't need a toner. **TRUE.** Toners gently exfoliate the skin, but they're not a necessity, says Vignjevic. One exception: people with blackheads. The alpha-hydroxy acids in some toners help lift and remove dead skin cells, which can block pores.

Filing your nails in one direction—instead of back and forth—will prevent shredding. **TRUE.** According to Carla Kay, a celebrity manicurist and pedicurist in Los Angeles, you should file from each corner of the nail toward the middle to avoid breakage and splitting.

14 You ingest pounds of lipstick every year, and it's harmful to your health. **FALSE.** The average woman is estimated to consume four milligrams of lipstick daily. To reach even half a pound, it would take four lifetimes (assuming lipstick is worn from age 16 to 80). Even then there are no health risks, according to Health Canada. >

The aluminum in antiperspirants can cause breast cancer. **FALSE.** The Canadian Cancer Society states that there is no proven link between antiperspirants and breast cancer. While Internet scuttlebutt breathes new life into the fear that aluminum salts and other chemicals in antiperspirants mess with breast cells via your armpits' lymph nodes (think of them as conduits in the body), there's no need to sweat it—literally.

Plucking your eyebrows will stop them from growing back. **TRUE.**

Sustained tweezing over many years (decades, really) may fatigue the hair follicle to the point where it may not grow back, says Oakwell-Morgan.

Applying petroleum jelly to your eyelashes makes them grow faster. **FALSE.**

"It's just genetics: either you have thick, gorgeous eyelashes or you don't," says Dr. Monica Furniss, an optometrist in Waterloo, Ont. In fact, the viscous jelly could actually plug glands on the inner rims of your eyelids that produce tears, flush out debris and fend off infections.

Lying in a tanning bed for 10 minutes adds up to the same amount of UV exposure as spending an entire day in the sun. **FALSE.** Still, don't quit your spray-on tan. You can't compare the two because tanning beds emit mostly UVA (long-wave) rays—which penetrate the skin deeper—whereas the sun emits a combination of UVA and UVB (short-wave) rays. Still, the beds emit UVA rays that are four to 20 times as strong as the sun, says Dr. Jason Rivers, a dermatologist and clinical professor at The University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Because tanning beds are linked to an increased risk of skin cancer, you're better off sticking with the kind of tan that rubs on.



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You can get rid of cellulite permanently. FALSE. Because we don't know what causes cellulite, the most we can hope for is temporary improvement in its appearance, says Dr. Mariusz Sapiezko, a dermatologist and cosmetic surgeon at the Western Canada Dermatology Institute in Edmonton. Apply prescription creams that contain tretinoin (a vitamin A derivative) on an ongoing basis, he says. While a type of surgery called "subcision" shows promise, the side effects, which include bruising and scarring, render it a last resort.

Tooth-whitening products and procedures can damage your teeth. WE DON'T KNOW. The only documented side effect of tooth-bleaching products, including blue-light whitening, is short-term tooth sensitivity. As the Canadian

Dental Association points out, the tools haven't been around long enough to document purported long-term risks, such as enamel corrosion and oral cancer.

Sleep debt is real—you can't make up for lost zzzs. TRUE. Most women need between 7.5 and 8.5 hours of sleep every night. The hours we lose to stress, overwork and late-night partying are gone forever, says Dr. Rachel Morehouse, a psychiatrist and medical director of the Atlantic Health Sciences Sleep Centre in Saint John, N.B.

You should change your shampoo and conditioner every few months because your hair gets "used" to them. PARTIALLY TRUE. You should change your hair products twice a year—but not because you build up a so-called "immunity" to them. Rather, the change of season—from hot and humid to dry and cold—calls for better moisturizing products, says Steinberg.

Toothpaste makes the best spot treatment for acne. FALSE. Although some toothpastes contain benzoyl peroxide (an acne-zapping ingredient that is also used as a whitening agent), there are many more-effective products that specifically target acne, says Vignjevic. Look for products with at least five percent benzoyl peroxide, like Clean & Clear Persa-Gel 5 (\$7).

Trimming your cuticles will make them grow back thicker. TRUE. Pushing your cuticles back is okay, but trimming them breaks the seal with the nail bed, triggering them to grow back thicker to protect the nail from infection, explains Kay. If you've already trimmed them, apply a cuticle oil, like OPI Avoplex Cuticle Oil to Go (\$10), to restore elasticity.

You shouldn't wash your hair every day. FALSE. Thanks to product advancements over the past decade, washing your hair every day isn't damaging, says Steinberg. As long as you use a conditioner after shampooing, you won't dry out your hair.

Drinking water keeps your skin from drying out. FALSE. Drinking water helps keep our internal organs functioning and is essential for life. But, says Vignjevic, all those bottles of Evian have little effect on the dryness of your skin—or your "glow," despite what celebs like to claim. "The topical application of creams is more important," he adds. His favourite? La Roche-Posay Toleriane Soothing Protective Skincare (\$25.50). □

Storing fragrances in the fridge will make them last longer. FALSE. The oils in the scents will permeate all fats—such as butter and milk—in your fridge, causing contamination. Instead, keep scents in a cool, dark place, preferably at or just below room temperature, says Bendeth.

Certain products and techniques can change the size of your pores. FALSE. We're born with a certain pore size, and there's not much that will change it, says Vignjevic. Other than slightly minimizing their appearance, pore-minimizing creams don't do much, he adds. Your only hope is laser therapy techniques, such as intense pulsed light. These may make your pores appear smaller by stimulating collagen production, which tightens and smooths the skin.

Split ends can be repaired. FALSE. A trim is the best way to deal with split ends—it stops them from fraying up the entire hair shaft. However, if you have left them too long or are genetically prone to split ends, you can mask them with salon products that contain emollients and sealing agents, like Kérastase Nutritive Nutri-Sculpt Serum (\$40), says Steinberg. "With long-term use—we're talking 10 years or so—they may fix the problem," he adds. Meanwhile, be kind to new growth, and go easy on the bleaching.