

'I Tried 3 Different Under-Eye Masks—Here's How They Worked'

Can they really banish puffy eyes and dark circles?

BY JULIA SULLIVAN December 11, 2017



From purplish-brown acne scars to whiteheads to red splotchiness to bluish-grey under-eye circles, if it wasn't, you know, my actual face, I might appreciate my Monet-like mosaic complexion. But alas, it's safe to say that my skin is regularly in need of improvement. And while the cosmetic chemists who concocted my Nars concealer might as well be gods in my book, makeup is (and always has been) a temporary fix for covering up acne-ridden or dull, tired skin. It's when I wash off my layers of foundation, blush, bronzer, and concealer at the end of the day that the extent of my exhaustion reveals itself. While I've tried sheet masks and multi-step Korean skin-care regimens to some degree of success (even if it was momentary), they've done little to detract from my puffy, dark eyes. So when I gained wind of under-eye pads, which are pegged as essentially sheet masks for the eye area, I was intrigued.

"Under-eye pads are designed to help with the most common under-eye problems, like dark circles, puffiness, and wrinkles," explains Suzanne J. Friedler, M.D., of Advanced Dermatology PC. "By placing them directly on the under-eye area, they help to cool the skin and reduce inflammation. The goal is to counteract the effects of sun, poor sleep, inadequate makeup removal, as well as dry, irritated, aging skin."

Irritated? Check. Too much sun exposure? Check. Poor sleep? Check, check, check. As a near-perfect case for someone who might benefit from wearing under-eye pads, I opted to try three of the most popular brands over the course of a week (with two days in between each test), with guidance from top dermatologists and skin-care experts. And while I saw dramatic, instantaneous results from all three, I quickly learned that the pads weren't a cure-all solution.

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UNDER-EYE PAD #1: KLORANE SMOOTHING AND RELAXING PATCHES WITH CORNFLOWER

After surveying my dry, splotchy complexion in the mirror the night of my first test, I couldn't wait to crack open my package of KLORANE Smoothing and Relaxing Patches with Cornflower (\$24 for seven pairs, sephora.com). But while the product has received a slew of rave reviews, I was skeptical. Cornflower extract? That's one moisturizing ingredient I wasn't familiar with (even as a beauty writer).

"Cornflower extract is known to have anti-inflammatory properties," explains Gary Goldenberg, M.D., of Goldenberg Dermatology in NYC. "It's rich in polyphenols, specifically flavonoids and anthocyanins, which gives it antioxidant properties. Cornflower is also known to act as an astringent, which helps to decrease oil production."

The process for sporting the pads, not surprisingly, mimicked that of sheet masks—you wear them for a suggested duration of time (20 minutes for KLORANE's cornflower pads) and remove. But unlike my experience with sheet masks, the process was far more enjoyable. I've worn one or two sheet masks in the past that have either obstructed my mouth (or more seriously, my wine-drinking ability) or dripped onto my clothing. With KLORANE's under-eye pads, the sensation resembled pressing a cool washcloth against my face.

The results were dramatic. Although my previous puffiness remained, the dark circles and slight irritation had vanished. I also noticed that the tiny fine lines around my eyes (which often get more pronounced as I grow tired) had minimized. Upon waking up the next morning, however, those instantaneous results had vanished.



UNDER-EYE PAD #2: DR. JART+DERMASK SPOT JET CHEEK & EYE LIFT

I've proclaimed my adoration for DR. JART+ skin-care products in the past, so when the opportunity arose to try the brand's signature under-eye pad mask, DR JART+ Dermask Spot Jet Cheek & Eye Lift (\$12 for two, sephora.com), I jumped at the chance. DR. JART's under-eye pads were enormous and encompassed nearly my entire cheek. According to the package, the mask is meant to restore "youthful-looking vibrancy" to the eye and cheek area.

"The combination of volufiline, collagen, and adenosine in an under-eye pad is very beneficial because of their restorative properties," says Jennifer Lee, M.D. and medical director of REN Dermatology in Franklin, Tennessee. "Whether you are looking for more fullness around your eyes or diminishing fine lines and wrinkles, these ingredients partner well together." It also contains hydrating glycerin and antioxidant vitamin E.

As instructed, I let the DR JART+ under-eye pad sit and saturate my skin for 30 minutes, applying periodic pressure to the area with my fingers to "enhance acupressure," as the packaging stressed. Similar to KLORANE, the pads had an immediate cooling effect, which felt incredibly calming.

Again, my results were instantaneous. Although KLORANE seemed to combat discoloration, DR. JART+ truly delivered on its packaging promise: to lift and plump the eye and cheek area. However, it just didn't seem to do much in terms of my bluish bags. I also woke up the next morning and saw that my results were non-existent once again.



UNDER-EYE PAD #3: LANCÔME ABSOLUE L'EXTRAIT ULTIMATE EYE PATCH

The Lancôme Absolue L'Extrait Ultimate Eye Patch (\$50, nordstrom.com) certainly felt like the most luxurious of the pads I tried. From shiny, golden packaging to balmy, rubber-like pads that were individually encased (not to mention their cost!), these babies screamed decadence. I felt like a total fraud spreading them beneath my eyes in a dimly lit bathroom apartment with stained walls.

While Klorane and Dr. Jart+'s pads both boasted a complexion-cocktail of ingredients, these Lancôme pads weren't playing around with fillers: the only ingredients were water and cellulose. "Cellulose is a known moisturizer and humectant, which helps to increase skin hydration, improving skin appearance," explains [Goldenberg](#). He says that humectants should be a go-to when looking to reduce signs of dryness.

Despite my bags disappearing and seeing a general lift in my face, I noticed, however, that something was visibly irritating my skin and eyes—which seemed odd, given that the pads were comprised of solely water and cellulose. Regardless, there was a slight touch of redness, which quickly disappeared roughly 10 minutes later.

Of course, Frielder had warned me that some under-eye pads can irritate sensitive skin. "The only downside to using under-eye pads is if the material or ingredient were to irritate or cause an allergy in skin," she explained. "Eyelid skin is the thinnest on the body, so it's the most sensitive."



THE VERDICT: A QUICK (TEMPORARY) FIX

I'd give rave reviews to all three of the under-eye pads I tried during my experiment. But while donning the pads would be perfect prior to a big date or event where your best self is on display, they're a temporary fix at best. Although I'd be ecstatic seeing my evened-out complexion after removing each mask, I was Cinderella—at the stroke of midnight, the facade would dissolve and I'd retreat back to my perpetually tired, visibly weary state.

Would I use all three pads again, and recommend them to my friends and family? Absolutely. But more importantly, the under-eye pads brought forth a more pressing need to address—and fix—the skin-care ailments I've been putting off for too long.