



**A new prescription liquid
that goes on like eyeliner
actually produces lashes
that are longer, darker,
and thicker. But is it too
good to be true?**

By Alyssa Kolsky Hertzig

LASH ADVANCES

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL THOMPSON

**Move over, mascara—
new lash boosters offer more
than a temporary effect.**



Mascara hasn't become a \$1.1-billion-a-year business in the U.S. because we're all perfectly content with the lashes we were born with. And, it turns out, cosmetics are just the beginning for women who want longer, darker, thicker fringe, thanks to new products that promise—and at least one breakthrough formula that delivers—what no mascara can. “We are now able to actually stimulate your natural eyelashes to grow longer,” says Wendy W. Lee, assistant professor of clinical ophthalmology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine’s Bascom Palmer Eye

Institute. “We’re talking about real results.” The one that has even the most discerning doctors fired up? Prescription-only Latisse, the first product that has been FDA-approved for eyelash growth. “To say that the patients were excited about the results would be putting it mildly,” says Richard Glogau, clinical professor of dermatology at the University of California, San Francisco, who participated in a study of Latisse. “These are women who have had eyelash envy most of their lives—they were turning handsprings.” A slew of over-the-counter products are vying to transform your lashes, too. We took a closer look to find out which ones can really pick up where nature left off.

STRONG MEDICINE

Doctors tend to be a fairly cautious bunch—but you’d never guess it by listening to ophthalmologist Lee on the subject of Latisse. “This is a huge breakthrough,” she says. “I’ve used it; several members of my family have used it. We’re all Asian women who don’t have very long lashes, and it’s really made a difference.”

The raves started years ago when ophthalmologists began noticing that patients using the glaucoma drug Lumigan experienced a curious side effect: darker, thicker, longer eyelashes. In some cases,

the lashes grew so long that they needed to be trimmed. Researchers zeroed in on the drug’s active ingredient—a prostaglandin called bimatoprost—and wasted no time exploring its cosmetic possibilities.

Latisse contains the same level of bimatoprost as the glaucoma drug, but it’s painted on the skin at the base of the lashes once a day, like liquid eyeliner, while Lumigan goes directly into the eye with a dropper. The theory is that

good!” says Doris Day, clinical assistant professor of dermatology at New York University Medical Center, who also participated in the study.

What’s the catch? A potential side effect known as increased iris pigmentation. Though not one patient in the Latisse study experienced it to any degree, a small number of those using Lumigan for glaucoma did (but even then, it was less than 1 percent, accord-

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Latisse somehow keeps lashes in their growth phase for an extended period of time, says Scott Whitcup, executive vice president of research and development for Allergan, the company that makes both Latisse and Lumigan.

What is becoming clear is that it does work: At the end of Latisse’s 16-week clinical study, 78 percent of patients averaged a 25 percent gain in lash length, an 18 percent increase in darkness, and a 106 percent jump in fullness. But cosmetics companies don’t need to panic quite yet. Most of the women in the study said that they’d likely still use mascara, adding that when they did apply it to their newly Latisse-treated lashes, “it looked so,

ing to Allergan). Because in those glaucoma patients the eye-color change was permanent—not to mention dramatic, ranging from brown eyes getting a little darker to hazel eyes turning brown—it is included as a possible side effect for Latisse as well. Still, doctors stress that, as scary as it sounds, “the use of Latisse on the base of the lashes is unlikely to cause iris discoloration because it’s not applied directly on the eye,” says Lee. She recommends that patients talk about the risks with their doctor, and adds that it has mostly been patients with light brown and hazel—not blue—eyes whose irises have gotten darker. “Prostaglandins may increase the melanin in the iris. And the risk of increased eye pigmenta-



tion may be greater in light-brown- and hazel-eyed patients since they have more melanosomes, or pigment cells, in their irises,” she says. A small number of patients in the study experienced slight but noticeable darkening of the skin along the lash lines, redness of the eyes, or itchy lids (all of which are reversible), but most reported no side effects.

Unfortunately, “puny lashes” are not yet covered by insurance, and Latisse costs approximately \$120 for a month’s supply. Any doctor can prescribe it, though experts recommend getting it from an ophthalmologist if you have a history of eye problems. Most users will start noticing a difference in 8 weeks, with full results visible in 16, but that growth eventually plateaus. Stop using the product, however, and lashes will eventually return to their natural growth cycle. Doctors are already experimenting with ways to stretch the benefits, though. “When your lashes get to a length you like, you can taper back to every other or every third day to maintain results,” says Lee.

NEXT-BEST THINGS?

If you aren’t ready to take the leap with Latisse, there are more over-the-counter options than ever. Most claim to work because of peptides, vitamins, or conditioners, but doctors are skeptical. “There hasn’t been any concrete evidence that nonprostaglandin products have any effect at all,” says Glogau. Doctors are also wary of the products’ more modest claims—many promise to make lashes

look fuller simply by moisturizing them. “It’s possible that conditioning could create a barrier that might make lashes less likely to fall out, but it would have no effect on actual growth,” says Neil Sadick, clinical professor of dermatology at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City. There may be a glimmer of hope, though: In a study conducted by Lee, patients applied Lumigan to one eye and a hydrating gel to the other and

found some slight growth on the gel side. But Lee is reluctant to draw conclusions. “It could have been the patients mixing up the brushes and applying the prostaglandin to the wrong side, or it could be that simply hydrating the lashes can stimulate growth,” she says. “It would be interesting to study simply hydrating the lashes, but I wouldn’t expect lashes to grow significantly.”

Prostaglandins, such as the one found in Latisse, have also made their way into several nonprescription products—and they’re causing drama that’s playing out like an episode of *Law & Order*. Some makers are suspected of not listing prostaglandin on

their labels, says Lee, while others include the ingredient but claim that their versions differ from the one in Latisse. Legally, they may not have a lash to stand on: Allergan holds the patent on the use of any prostaglandin or prostaglandin analogue in eyelash-growth products, and the company is willing to put up a fight to defend it. (An FDA seizure in November 2007 of approximately \$2 million worth of Jan Marini’s

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original lash-enhancing formula with bimatoprost, the prostaglandin used in Latisse, probably helped spur more companies to go prostaglandin-free.)

Still, several products containing prostaglandins remain on the market. And while doctors admit that these have the potential to work, they hardly endorse them. “They may have some capability, but they just haven’t been studied in a controlled fashion,” says Sadick. And some of these lash enhancers cost \$160, which is more than Latisse. “Trying these products may have been one thing when you didn’t have a good, FDA-approved option, but now you do,” says Day. ♦

Test Run

Nonprescription lash enhancers may not have won over doctors, but judging from the fervent blog chatter, they certainly have their supporters. *Allure* editors put seven to the test—and these lived up to their claims.

RevitaLash Eyelash Conditioner, \$150.

WHAT’S IN IT: Prostaglandin analogues and panthenol.

OUR RESULTS:

“After a few weeks, my lashes definitely looked longer. They hit a plateau, and now they’re maintaining the new length.”

—Stephanie Tweitto Jacob



Talika Lipocils Gel, \$40.

WHAT’S IN IT: The botanicals nettle, horse chestnut, allantoin, soy lecithin, apple extract, and Saint-John’s-wort.

OUR RESULTS: “My lashes seem darker, and the bottom ones are noticeably longer—they even touch my face.”

—Kate Sullivan



Peter Thomas Roth Lashes to Die For, \$125.

WHAT’S IN IT: Prostaglandin analogues; glycosaminoglycans; vitamins A, C, and E; and provitamin B₅.

OUR RESULTS: “Where I once had stubs, I now have pretty Bambi lashes. They’re longer but not thicker.”

—Kristin Perrotta



RapidLash Eyelash Renewal Serum, \$49.95.

WHAT’S IN IT: Polypeptides, proteins, vitamins, and moisturizers.

OUR RESULTS: “My lashes look longer and thicker. I’ve even switched to brown mascara; I don’t need the black stuff.”

—Catherine Scroop

