

american spa

Raising the Brow

*June 20, 2016
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Even though eyelashes continue to be all the rage these days, studies show that lashes are not necessarily the most important feature on a person's face. When it comes to first impressions and social interactions, eyebrows actually have the largest influence in facial recognition and the way a person views another's emotional expressions, according to a study conducted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences. "Women are often looking for ways to make their features pop, and brow shaping does just that," says Dena Bruckman, marketing director at Grande Naturals. "It's an eye-opener and serves as a frame for the entire face." Unfortunately, like the hair on the head, brows often suffer from issues that affect how they appear. "Brow issues can be the result of many factors," says Kathryn Reynolds, O.D., vice president of eyecare for MediNiche. "Over-tweezing, an underlying hormonal imbalance, a nutrient deficiency, allergies, an autoimmune disorder, or a response to medications can be culprits."

According to Natalie Plain, founder and CEO of Billion Dollar Brows, the most pressing problem that clients face is sparse hair growth or bald spots within their brows. "Some people over-pluck in their youth, some lose brow volume with age, and some never have thick brows to begin with," she says. "Either way, most women seek fuller, better-defined eyebrows." In addition to over-plucked and thin brows, there are clients with a sensitivity to waxing, clients with hair that grows downward, light-colored brows that blend in with skintone, and medical conditions that affect hair growth. To ensure proper care is taken when treating brow issues, Reynolds recommends you refer clients to a health professional, such as an eye doctor, dermatologist, or an allergist to rule out any health-related issues before performing any treatment. For example, according to Laterica Reddix, owner and CEO of High Maintenance Brows, thinning brows with fading tails can be a red flag for a thyroid issue, or the client could be suffering from ailments such as alopecia areata, trichotillomania, eczema, or a vitamin deficiency.

The Right Approach

If no health issue is identified, you can move forward with treating the brows. However, a consultation should come first. It's important to keep in mind that brows can be a sensitive topic. "Any beauty flaw can feel embarrassing," says Plain. "Seasoned professionals know that making a client feel like they are not alone is key. Most women are unhappy with some aspect of their eyebrows, which is why brow cosmetics and services are in such demand."

Thinning Brows: According to Imahiyerobo-Ip, the most common eyebrow complaint in patients is thinning, which can be caused by over-tweezing or waxing, but it can also be caused by a medical condition, like hypothyroidism or alopecia areata, which can affect the eyebrows and cause hair loss. However, when no medical condition exists, products can be used to help stimulate hair growth. "Latisse is a prescription medication that contains bimatoprost, a prostaglandin analog that can help eyebrows and eyelashes grow," says Imahiyerobo-Ip. "This requires a prescription from a healthcare provider." Non-prescription lash and brow conditioners are also available and highly effective. They help strengthen, nourish, and condition the hairs to create an environment for natural brows to flourish, according to Sabrina Little, senior director of marketing and product development for Athena Cosmetics, manufacturer of RevitaLash. "Eyebrow conditioners with sophisticated peptides, antioxidants, and moisturizing ingredients can help soften wiry brows, making them behave so they lay down in place for proper shaping and trimming," she says.

Another option for filling in sparse eyebrows is semi-permanent tattooing, which is done by tapping pigment very superficially into the upper layer of the dermis, often with a non-motorized hand-held, single use pen with small needles at the tip. "This method can be used to create tiny hair strokes," says Merszei. "Semi-permanent brow tattooing can be used to fill in sparse brows with solid color. These techniques last around two or more years, depending on color choice, UV exposure, and use of exfoliating products and peels."

According to Nicole Pigott, brand manager at RapidLash, a lash and brow serum can be used to improve the overall appearance of diminishing brow lines by strengthening brows and preventing breakage. A brow pencil can also instantly improve the look of thin brows. "Many of our clients complain about thin, sparse brows, but they feel like pencil looks too harsh and ages them," says Hannah Duncan, co-owner of Aesthetic Ambassadors. So, she recommends a neutral-colored mineral powder that adheres to the brows instead.

Excessive hair loss or chemotherapy: For hair loss or side-effects of chemotherapy, brow extensions are an option. "For the serious brow-seeking client, there are now brow transplants and extensions that help physically thicken the existing brow zone by attaching hair to the individual's own hair—much like lash extensions," says Little.