

# Lashing Out

Who isn't talking about this new beauty treatment? BY DR. MELISSA W. SCHWARZSCHILD

**W**hat woman wouldn't want to have long, luscious, movie-star-glam eyelashes?

Allergan, the pharmaceutical company behind Botox, has launched an eye treatment that promises exactly that. Latisse is approved by the Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of hypotrichosis, the medical term for wimpy eyelashes. It promises longer, thicker and darker lashes to those of us who otherwise need several coats of mascara.

Interestingly, bimatoprost ophthalmic solution, the medical name for the drug, was first used in 2001 to lower the intraocular pressure in patients with a type of glaucoma. Clinicians noticed that patients treated with bimatoprost developed longer, thicker eyelashes as a side effect — the bimatoprost binds to prostaglandin receptors in the hair follicles. These receptors are involved in hair growth. Bimatoprost works by increasing the number of hairs in the anagen, or growth, phase of the hair cycle. By increasing the duration of the growth phase, it allows eyelashes to grow longer and fuller.

Patients get Latisse by prescription and see best results after 16 weeks. Cost varies but the daily-use kits run about \$120-\$150 for a one- or two-month supply. Results are not permanent, and application of the product must be repeated to maintain the effect.

For some women, mascara will remain their lash-enhancing ritual. Mascaras are made up of pigments to darken the lashes, and waxes, such as beeswax, to thicken them. The applicator wand is important to evenly coat each eyelash to achieve the thickest effect. Applying a second coat of mascara after the first coat dries provides extra fullness. Some mascara contains nylon or acrylic polymer fibers to give lashes a fuller and longer appearance by clinging to the lashes like mini lash extensions.

What about mascaras that promise to curl your lashes in addition to lengthening them? The polymers in these mascaras actually shrink as they dry so that after applying the mascara to your lashes, your lashes bend and curl with them.

I don't think that Latisse is going to render mascara and false eyelashes obsolete, especially for women who like the look of very dark, extra full lashes. But for many women, including lots of Hollywood stars, it's an exciting new way to achieve thicker, natural lashes. The product has undergone 13 years of testing, and appears to be safe, but it should not be used if you have abnormal ocular pressure. Also, it can cause irritation of the eyelids and a darkening effect along the upper lash line. I've seen this side effect in sev-



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JEFFREY BLAND

eral women using the original bimatoprost glaucoma medication and it actually looks like a subtle rim of eyeliner.

I started using Latisse in February in hopes that by summer I'll have those luscious lashes I've always dreamed about.

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