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Your Ultimate Guide to Preventing and Getting Rid of Crow's Feet

By JEN ADKINS. June 7, 2019



There's a lot to love about the evolution that happens in your 30s: getting better at self-care, relaxing into emotionally mature relationships, and hopefully achieving a little more financial security. But maybe the creeping in of crow's feet isn't something you're really looking forward to.

"The age is highly variable, but we see many people in their mid-30s starting to see small lines that don't go away," says New York City dermatologist Neal Schultz, M.D., founder of BeautyRX skin care and host of DermTV.com. "People could fall into this category in their 20s or not until their 40s, of course, but mid-30s is the average."

All the lotions, supplements, and tinctures in the world might not be quite powerful enough to reverse these wrinkles around the eyes once they set in, so prevention is your best bet. But even if you're already past that point, finding a great dermatologist can work wonders.

We tapped the expertise of Schultz, as well as board-certified dermatologist and celebrity beauty expert [Dr. Anna Guanche](#) of Bella Skin Institute. Keep scrolling to learn about how to prevent and minimize the appearance of crow's feet.

What Causes Crow's Feet?

"To get an idea of how wrinkles form, picture a paperclip," Schultz says. "When you bend that paperclip back and forth and back and forth, after a while, the paperclip will break. This is the

and elastic fibers in your skin and cause wrinkles anywhere on the face."

Guanche says, "Crow's feet occur when the circular muscle around the eyes contracts—the orbicularis oculi muscle—and it then causes these perpendicular pull lines where the muscles insert into the skin. Things that cause this muscle to contract are squinting, laughing, and smiling."



The biggest culprit: smiling, according to Schultz. "Smiling is a repetitive movement, and chances are good you smile many times every day. Everyone smiles a bit differently, but those people who use the muscles next to their eyes when they smile obviously will get crow's feet earlier than people who don't."

He adds, "Squinting from the sun is a repetitive movement, and just as in that paper clip analogy, continuous squinting causes the collagen and elastic fibers to break down and wrinkles to form."

And even though sleep is one of most essential things for keeping our skin smooth and radiant, ironically, it might actually be low-key responsible for some wrinkles. "Sometimes, your skin gets pulled on the pillowcase when you are sleeping, and that causes creases in your skin," Schultz says.

How to Prevent Crow's Feet

Both Schultz and Guanche recommend wearing sunscreen daily, as well as sunglasses and eyeglasses to prevent squinting.



As for nighttime, Schultz says, "The ideal way to sleep to avoid wrinkles is on your back, using one of the u-shaped travel pillows. This is obviously not something that most people can do, so using a silk pillowcase can help...your skin is able to slide more easily and won't get tugged or pulled."

Guanche adds that eating antioxidant-rich fruits and nuts, including coconut oil, blueberries, strawberries, cantaloupe, and walnuts, is helpful, but only a start. "Since these are dynamic lines caused by facial expression, they will not be erased with even the greatest of diets."

What About Botox?

Botox might seem like a last resort for getting rid of wrinkles, but both Schultz and Guanche are fans, even as a preventative measure. "If you're afraid of the needle, topical botulinum toxin is available in your dermatologist's office," Schultz says. "It has the exact same results as the injectable form with no pain. It will take about 30 minutes in the office, and just like the injectable form, results will last for three to four months."

Guanche recommends Baby Botox: "Low dose neuromodulators such as Botox, Xeomin, Jeuveau, or Dysport can prevent the deepening of lines in the crow's feet area."



And the side effects of injectables? Guanche says these include bruising, swelling, and asymmetry. However, "The side effects are generally mild and very tolerable when an experienced and properly trained board-certified dermatologist is chosen."

She adds, "There are certain rare diseases such as Lambert-Eaton syndrome or myasthenia gravis that are contraindications for this treatment."

Schultz's advice: "Botulinum toxin isn't recommended for those who are pregnant or those who have had facial paralysis such as Bell's palsy until the effects of the palsy are gone. And even then, choose a provider with experience in using injectables on people with a history of facial paralysis."

How to Smooth Existing Fine Lines

Exfoliation is another important pre-emptive measure, and it also helps minimize crow's feet that have already started forming. "Exfoliating works by taking away the dead skin cells on the top layer of your skin, called the epidermis. On top of forcing fresh skin to the surface, this also adds volume to the epidermis, helping to smooth out lines," Schultz says.

He champions chemical exfoliants and says the gold standard is glycolic acid. "Under the epidermis is the dermis, where the collagen is formed. Using glycolic acid to exfoliate helps promote new collagen growth, which also adds volume to the dermis. This easy step can help smooth out the early lines."

He also suggests using peptides, "tiny particles that the body thinks are little pieces of broken collagen," he explains. "The body 'sees' those broken collagen pieces and, in turn, the dermis makes more collagen to replace the broken collagen."



mineral sunscreen, a concentrated eye serum, and hydrogel eye masks to address puffiness, dark circles, fine lines, and wrinkles.

Dermatologist-Approved Procedures

If you need to break out the big guns, it might be time to pay a visit to a dermatologist. "In-office glycolic acid peels are a great start. We use a higher percentage of glycolic acid than you can get at home, and it takes less than 10 minutes for the entire procedure. The acid actually works in two to three minutes," Schultz says. "Also, laser treatments are available. They work by making your body believe there is a small wound. The body reacts by building more collagen to heal the wound."

Guanche says, "In office, we can do a series of deep microneedling procedures, which stimulates collagen and therefore minimizes the appearance of lines. For this, we also could opt for a series of Jessner [chemical] peels, a light peel that exfoliates and smoothes out fine lines. For deeper lines, a series of Fraxel 1550 [laser] treatments would be ideal."

The Takeaway

Crow's feet are natural. If you're smiling and laughing enough to develop fine lines around your eyes, then you're definitely doing something right! But if you want to keep the skin smoother around that area, remember one thing: "Preventative care is key," Schultz says. "Also, pass these tips on to your teenage daughters; they'll thank you one day."

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