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## Rx for longer lashes

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Despite advanced fattening and lengthening formulas, mascara can only do so much.

Now there is a legitimate fix for women who want long eyelashes. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration in December approved Latisse, a prescription treatment that increases eyelash length, fullness and color.

Latisse costs about \$120 for a supply that will last a month or two. That might seem steep - especially since insurance does not cover the cost - but consider that high-end mascaras cost upward of \$30, which contributes to the yearly \$5 billion in sales of mascara worldwide.

Washington dermatologist Marilyn Berzin says Latisse appeals to a number of different patients in her practice - young women who may have short lashes, menopausal women who are suffering thinning hair and lashes and patients suffering from alopecia (severe hair loss) - among them.

"Patients can experience longer, fuller and darker lashes in as little as eight weeks, with full results in 16 weeks," Dr. Berzin says.

After that time, she says, users can cut back on usage to every other day. If they stop using the drug altogether, lashes will revert to their previous appearance.

Latisse is made by Allergan, the same company that manufactures Botox, the popular injectable wrinkle treatment. Like Botox, which originally was injected to treat muscle spasms until doctors and patients discovered its wrinkle-relaxing capabilities, Latisse's lash-growing benefits were discovered by accident.

Latisse comes from another Allergan product, Lumigan eye drops, which are used to treat glaucoma. Patients using Lumigan discovered the side effect of longer, fuller lashes.

Before applying to the FDA for approval, Allergan held a clinical trial with 280 subjects. Half used Latisse for 16 weeks. Their eyelashes typically grew 25 percent longer, 106 percent thicker and 18 percent darker. Some patients (3.6 percent) did experience itchy or red eyes.

One of the warnings for both Lumigan and Latisse is the possible change in pigmentation of the eyelid and darkening of the iris. Though not harmful, once change of the iris does occur, it is permanent. No subjects in the clinical trials experienced eye-color changes.

Janie Stanton, 56, of Alexandria, began using Latisse two months ago. Ms. Stanton suffered an eye injury 40 years ago, and there were several spots on her upper and lower eyelids where lashes refused to grow. She says she noticed results within a week or two - her existing lashes were much longer and lashes were growing where there had been none.

"I have gotten incredible results," Ms. Stanton says. "I had been considering an eyelash transplant. I have been using it about two months, and people really notice."

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