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**Holiday Skin Stress? Get the Glow Back**

**Holiday stress, too many goodies, and a whole lot of celebrating can take a toll on your skin. Experts offer quick fixes and new ways to glow through the season.**

By [Colette Bouchez](#)

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Reviewed By [Brunilda Nazario, MD](#)

WebMD Feature

Shopping. Cooking. Cleaning. Celebrating. It's the holidays, replete with food and drinks and too much to do on too little sleep, all taking place during a sometimes harsh, wintry weather season. The end result: Just when you want to look sparkly and terrific, your skin gets the holiday blues.

From dark circles under the eyes to a decidedly "green in the gills" complexion to bloated, puffy, swollen eyes and zits when you least expect it, for many women seasonal skin problems can abound.

The good news: Not only are there things you can do right now to ensure your angelic "glow" during this season, but there are also some cosmetic tricks and tips to keep your holiday glow going clear into the New Year.

The best place to begin, say experts, is with some preventive care, starting as soon as possible.

"If you think you're going to be partying a lot, start ahead of time to make your skin look healthier. Laser treatments can help do that, but so can topical creams, particularly serums containing vitamin C or creams containing retinol," says David Goldberg, MD, director of the Skin Laser and Surgery Specialists of New York and New Jersey and clinical professor of dermatology at the Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York City.

The better shape your skin is in as the holiday season starts, says Goldberg, the better you will look throughout the season.

What can also help: Increasing the moisture level in your skin, also starting as early in the season as possible.

"A lot of the skin stress that appears during the holidays, including some dark circles, can be the result of a lack of moisture, particularly if you live in a colder climate and are exposed to indoor heating," says Sumayah Jamal, MD, associate professor of dermatology at the NYU Medical Center in New York City. Once you begin drinking alcohol, she says, you add to the dryness, and even that extra glass or two of wine could push you over into another skin type.

One way around the problem, she says, is to trade up to a richer, more emollient moisturizer, beginning right at the start of the holiday season.

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If you've been using a gel product, Jamal suggests switching to a cream or lotion. If you've been using a cream or lotion, switch to a richer version; try using a night cream during the day, for example. Or try a rich skin balm rather than a cream.

"Balms are products designed to offer optimum moisture, and they are excellent for buffering the skin against extreme dryness," Jamal tells WebMD.

For many women, the biggest holiday skin problem is not dryness but breakouts, even if they don't normally suffer from acne. The reason, says Goldberg, is that stress causes women to produce more of that traditionally male hormone testosterone, and it's those surges that give us the holiday zits.

"If you are prone to acne it could happen more frequently, but even if you have great skin, holiday stress -- or any stress -- can cause your skin to break out," says Goldberg.

His solution: Over-the-counter benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid treatments, placed directly on the pimple.

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Jamal says you may be able to stop those holiday breakouts before they start if you exfoliate your skin regularly and use an alcohol-free toner to totally remove all traces of make-up and keep pores open.

"I like a combination treatment of Kiehls blue astringent plus azaleic acid prescription cream, or go over-the-counter with benzoyl peroxide used preventatively," says Jamal.

If, despite your best efforts, a breakout occurs anyway, makeup artist Holly Mordini suggests hitting the pimple with a few drops of Visine to constrict blood vessels (yes, the stuff that "gets the red out" of burning eyes will also get the red out of your blemish), then pat lightly with a concealer matched to your skin tone.

"Press the concealer into the blemish and feather around it. Add a bit of powder on cotton ball and press it on as well, because it's that layering process that works best to hide a blemish," says Mordini, vice president of global artistry for the Los Angeles-based Smashbox Cosmetics. Using a "heavy blob of concealer" will make your blemish look more obvious, as will choosing a shade too light.

### The Day After: Curing a 'Skin Hangover'

Though preventive measures can help, the inevitable "skin hangover" is still bound to occur. More alcohol, combined with richer, usually saltier foods, plus a lot less sleep, can come together to give you a bloated, puffy look, particularly the day after a night of holiday cheer.

But experts say you can still face that 9 a.m. staff meeting looking bright eyed and bushy tailed if you simply "play it cool."

"When it comes to puffiness, particularly puffy eyes, cold is the answer to it all, and there is no better treatment than cold packs," says legendary skin care expert and make-up artist Adrien Arpel. The best part, she says, is that you only need 5 to 7 minutes to see results!

In fact, Arpel, who now heads the Signature Club A line for the Home Shopping Network, so believes in the power of cold packs that she designed her own gel-based cooling face mask specifically contoured to the eye area, where puffiness can be significant for many women.

If you can't get your hands on her gel mask in time, Arpel says buy a pair of gel-filled infant teething rings at the drugstore, chill them for about 30 minutes, and place one on each eye for five minutes to reduce the swelling.

"If you do it in a relaxing atmosphere like a hot bath, it somehow seems to work even better," says Arpel.

Another way around the bloat, she says, is to spend the night after the party sleeping with your head elevated. "The higher the better if you want to wake up less puffy," says Arpel.

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Jamal agrees. "Alcohol dilates your blood vessels, and that is what allows the fluid to leave the vessels and enter the tissues, which in turn is what causes the puffiness." So, she says, sleeping with your head elevated can help the fluids to drain from your puffy cheeks and eyes.

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Another point worth mentioning: To reduce puffy eyes, try swapping an emollient-based eye cream for a gel-based product.

"Sometimes the emollients in the cream formulation will actually hold water in your eye area, and that can make you look puffier, whereas a gel formulation won't do that," says Mordini.

For a quick do-it-yourself face de-bloating, Goldberg suggests soaking a washcloth in equal parts of whole milk and water, then laying the cloth on your face for 10 to 15 minutes.

"It will soothe an irritated complexion and also help reduce some of the bloating," he tells WebMD.

To take down the swelling on eyes, he's a big believer in compresses made of cooled tea bags.

"There's something in the tea that actually helps shrink the swelling," he says.

### 'Makeup' the Difference

Besides puffiness, a simple lack of sleep can cause holiday eyes to develop dark circles, those bluish or sometimes brownish patches that not only give away your secret nightlife, but also your age -- and sometimes even add on a few years!

Though a good moisturizer can help, among the newest cosmetic treatments is under-eye primers with light-reflecting properties.

"Smashbox has just developed Eye Prime specifically to address the under-eye circle problem. It hydrates, fills in fine lines, and has light-reflecting pigments to brighten the entire under-eye area and a concealer to cover any flaws," says Mordini.

Arpel developed a similar product called Eye Specific. This nontoxic, silicone-based product also fills in fine lines and wrinkles while giving the eye a gentle, colorless boost of radiance to reduce the dark circles. It too comes with a concealer to help hide other under-eye flaws.

When choosing these or any concealing products, the trick, say experts, is to avoid the light or "white" look of yesterday and instead opt for a shade closest to your foundation color.

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"Women make the common mistake of using a concealer that's too light and that accentuates dark circles and makes puffy areas look puffier," says Mordini. Likewise, she says if eyes are really puffy, skip any light highlight or "iridescent glow" products under the eye.

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Where you should apply that glow, says Arpel, is just under or over the brow bone, which, she says, can "pull attention away from the dark circles." To decrease the look of sleepy, tired eyes during the day, Arpel says skip liner and mascara on the lower lid, which can make puffy eyes look (and feel) worse.

To achieve that bright, "I-never-stay-out-all-night" glow, Mordini says to bypass the smoky dark eye shadows and choose a peach or champagne color instead.

"Gold counteracts redness and brightens darkness, so a champagne or peachy shadow will brighten the eye area and help you avoid a sleepy, tired look," says Mordini.

And what about waking up the "morning after" looking just a bit "green in the gills"? The perfect antidote, says Mordini, is to warm up the skin with a bronzer -- yes, a bronzer -- even in the middle of winter.

"Especially in the middle of winter, a bronzer is the best way to perk up your complexion and get the glow going," says Mordini. But, she says, when choosing a product, opt for a cream bronzer (her choice is Smashbox's Develop Crème Bronzer) instead of a powder to give dry winter skin a competitive edge.

"If you are going to be drinking alcohol, especially in dry winter weather, it's best to stick with [skin] products that are cream or gel based because they dehydrate your skin less," says Mordini.

Other instant skin pick-me-ups, she says, include an apricot-tinted silicone under-makeup base called Photo Finish Color Correcting Primer, which minimizes red tones and blotchy uneven color, counteracts a sallow complexion, and hides dark circles, spots, and other signs of skin stress or damage.

"We also make a product called Artificial Light, which can make you look as if you've had eight hours of sleep when you've really only had three," says Mordini.

Arpel agrees with the concept and developed Signature Club A Firm Fill, a pink-tinted firming and retexturizing face gel, along with Candlelight, a nearly colorless makeup/moisturizer that puts a soft glow on even the most tired-looking skin. Topped with her ProNiacin moisturizing Golden Patina bronzer, no one will ever guess it's your morning-after face!

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Says Arpel: "It can make you look rested and relaxed and just back from vacation, even if you're not!"

Colette Bouchez is the author of *Your Perfectly Pampered Pregnancy: Beauty, Health and Lifestyle Advice for the Modern Mother-to-Be*.

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SOURCES: David Goldberg, MD, director, Skin Laser and Surgery Specialists of New York and New Jersey; clinical professor, director of laser research and Mohs surgery, department of dermatology, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, New York City; co-vice-president, Skin Cancer Foundation. Sumayah Jamal, MD, associate professor of dermatology, NYU Medical Center, New York City. Holly Mordini, makeup artist; vice president of global artistry, Smashbox Cosmetics, Los Angeles. Adrien Arpel, makeup artist; director, Signature Club A Skin Care and Cosmetics for the Home Shopping Network.