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The Eyes Have It
AN FDA-APPROVED DRUG PROMISES LONGER, FULLER LASHES

Eyelashes are getting a lot of notice these days, Richmond beauty specialists say. “There is a hot trend now to make your lashes fuller, longer and to extend them,” says Jean Granger, cosmetics manager for Richmond’s Saks Fifth Avenue store, “because through the environment and mechanical aggressors such as mascaras, eyelash curlers, makeup removers, medications and aging, your eyelashes will fall out.”

Dr. Joe Niamtu III, head of Cosmetic Facial Surgery in Midlothian, has found a solution that he calls “great stuff”: Latisse, a prescription drug by Allergan that the Food and Drug Administration approved at the end of 2008. The first eyelash enhancer with FDA approval, Latisse became available early this year. “The drug Latisse was developed to treat glaucoma,” Niamtu says. “These patients were coming back to their ophthalmologists with lower intraocular pressures and noticing that their eyelashes were growing in the treated eye.”

Latisse, which costs $100 to $120 and lasts about three months, is applied nightly along the eyelash base like liquid eyeliner. It works by stimulating the bulbs at the end of hair follicles with the active ingredient bimatoprost, which makes hair grow longer, darker and even thicker, according to Niamtu. He says he has prescribed Latisse to 600 patients since he began carrying the drug in early summer, and none of them have suffered from any of the side effects that consumers are warned about (possible darkening of the eyelid and mild burning, dryness, itching or redness of the eye).

Meanwhile, Saks received a new product in late summer, an over-the-counter cosmetic called neuLash, which costs $150 and lasts about three months. Applied like Latisse, neuLash uses proteins, vitamins and moisturizers to strengthen and replenish the lashes, Granger says. —BE