

Eyelash extensions: Are they safe? ^[1]

Hey Alice!

Do you know anything about the safety of eyelash extensions?

Lulu

Answer

Dear Lulu,

Great question ? it's smart to approach cosmetic opportunities such as these with your eyes wide open! There are a handful of ways to make eyelashes look fluttery and long, including mascara, false eyelashes, eyelash extensions, and certain medications. Eyelash extensions are sometimes confused with false eyelashes, which are a set of removable synthetic lashes that adhere to the eyelid with glue. False lashes are made for home use and may be purchased at locations that sell cosmetics. Eyelash extensions, on the other hand, are semi-permanent and applied by a trained professional in sanitary conditions. If applied carefully and correctly by a professional technician, they're also generally safer than false eyelashes.

First, it might be helpful to talk about the application of eyelash extensions:

- Generally, the client lies on their back on a table; the technician sits behind them. The table can often be adjusted to the exact right height to allow the technician the optimal posture for applying the extensions.
- The client closes their eyes or looks down, following the instructions of the technician.
- The technician handles each extension with needle-thin tweezers. The technician dips the end of the extension in glue, and then touches the extension to one lash and holds it there for 30 to 40 seconds until the lash adheres to the eyelash.
- Throughout the process, the technician checks to make sure that no lashes are sticking together.
- After all extensions have been applied, the technician may trim them a bit to give them a natural look. The whole process may take anywhere from 40 to 90 minutes, depending on how many lashes are applied and if the client needs to make adjustments throughout.

The extensions last anywhere from two to six weeks. Avoiding swimming, eye rubbing, and applying moisture near the eyes may help the extensions last longer. It's not uncommon for people to go back to the salon for touch ups after a couple of weeks. If the extensions require removal, the safest bet is to seek professional removal.

If you're considering getting extensions, some precautions to consider taking are checking online reviews of the salon, asking the technician or esthetician to see their certification, and conducting a spot test of the eyelash glue on the skin. Though it's a relatively simple process, there are still some health risks involved, such as:

- **Glue fumes:** Reputable salons use medical or pharmaceutical grade glue. This glue is labeled as such on the bottle, is either black (to make it look more like mascara) or clear, and is ideally free of formaldehyde (trying asking to see the bottle to check out the ingredients). Non-medical grade glue and glue with formaldehyde may irritate the eyes.
- **Hair loss:** The weight of the extensions or using too much glue may stress eyelash follicles to the point of gradual hair loss. Once lashes break or fall out, they might not grow back.
- **Infections:** There have been some cases of eyelid and cornea infections due to eyelash extensions. If applied or maintained in unsanitary conditions, extensions may lead to bacterial, viral, fungal, or other infections.
- **Improper technique:** When applied correctly, one synthetic lash is glued to one natural lash. However, sometimes lashes may be glued together if the technician isn't careful, which can be problematic because lashes grow at different rates. If a faster-growing lash is glued to a slower-growing lash, the slower lash may be pulled out as the other grows, thinning the lashes and causing an annoying "pinprick" pain. Improper technique may also take the form of gluing several synthetic lashes to one natural lash. These lash bundles, also known as flares, are made to be glued to the lid directly, but some salons use them as extensions, as it may be thought of as a time-saving method to some. However, gluing bundles to one or more lashes might weigh down and break or tear out lashes, and may even inhibit future growth.
- **Use of allergenic materials:** Some lashes are made of horse hair, which may cause allergies and dermatitis. If this is a concern, be sure to ask for synthetic lashes. Some people may also have an allergic reaction to the glue itself or the adhesive remover.

It's best to seek care from a health care professional if any swelling, redness, or eyelid irritation occurs at any point while wearing extensions. In addition, it may be helpful to ask the salon what materials were used to help identify the source of the allergic reaction.

For those seeking an alternative to eyelash extensions, bimatoprost (commercially known as Latisse) is a prescription medication approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to help eyelashes grow longer and thicker. It's applied as a topical solution to the upper lash line only, with results expected after two months of daily use. This isn't a permanent solution as lashes typically revert to their original form if use is discontinued. Some side effects may include eye and eyelid irritation, eyelid discoloration, increased brown pigmentation of the iris, and unintended hair growth near the eyes.

People opt for eyelash extensions and serums for a variety of reasons, including fuller looking lashes and cutting down time in their makeup routines. However, it's good to note that these typically enhancements come at a higher price. Eyelash extensions may cost a few hundred dollars, not including touch ups while bimatoprost typically costs around the 100-dollar range

for a one-month supply. No matter the price, it's always helpful to check on all those safety concerns before deciding on any cosmetic enhancement.

Hope this helps!

Alice!

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