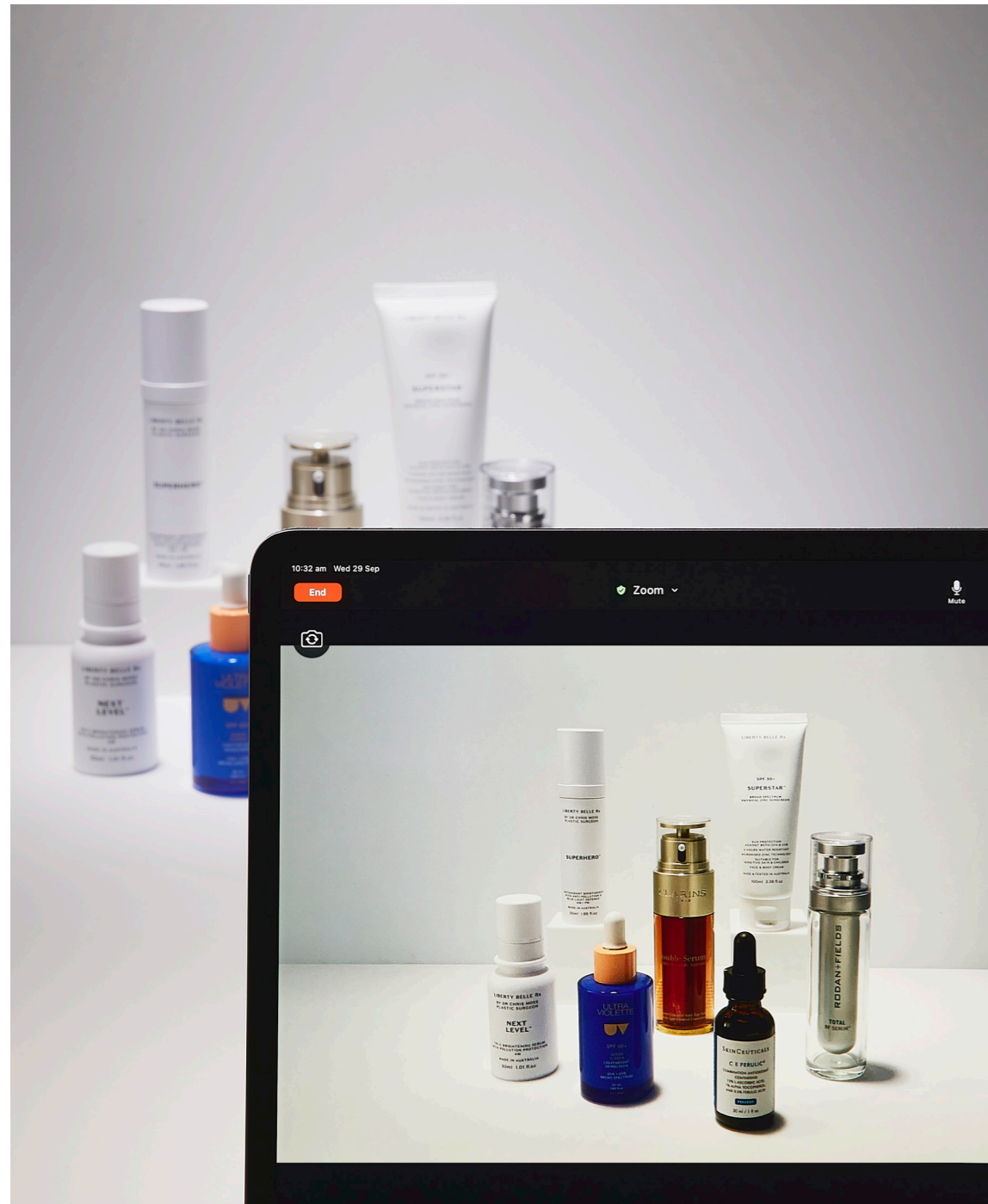


FACE TIME



The tried and tested treatments and tweakments that will guarantee you look better on Zoom

If anyone has raked billions in profit out of the pandemic, it's Zoom. The video-conferencing tool is now embedded in our daily working lives, and with many predicting a hybrid office-home future, communicating through a video screen ain't going away. Sorry.

Zoom Gloom is a real thing. And now researchers are reporting another similar phenomenon: Zoom Dysmorphia. Short of turning off your camera, the only way to avoid it is to keep reminding yourself that front-facing cameras tend to make your eyes look smaller and other parts of

your face larger. (That's your computer or phone's wide-angle lens working its magic.) A few helpful tricks to lessen the effect: raise your screen so the camera faces downward, move it further away to lessen the distortion and invest in good lighting. But more on that in a moment.

The top cosmetic doctors see a silver lining. While we're considering ourselves from these new angles, we're diverting our attention away from the top part of the face to the lower. "Generally, when people start seeing a cosmetic doctor, they come in fixated on the upper face and just want to focus on treating forehead lines with Botox," says Dr Joseph Hkeik of Sydney's All Saints Clinic. "As they form a relationship with the injector, they let them do the bottom. Now more people are paying attention."

A word of caution from Hkeik: remember what you're seeing on Zoom is the result of lighting and a specific camera angle, so before you run off to see a cosmetic doctor, investigate lighting tricks to improve your view of yourself. Sydney-based cosmetic physician Dr Jeremy Cumpston has worked on countless television productions and knows all the industry secrets. "Your largest light source needs to be in front of you, so if that's a window with natural light, then face in that direction," he says. "That way, you won't end up with unflattering shadows. Overhead lighting doesn't do anyone any favours either. Invest in one of those ring lights — it means the light is dispersed more evenly. A secondary fill light placed off to the side will make things look even better."

Okay, so you've tried all of that and still want options to remedy the bottom half? "Thankfully, there are plentiful non-surgical options available now for this area that are designed to stimulate the skin into producing more hyaluronic acid, collagen and elastin," says Hkeik.

Keep reading for the latest options for lifting sagging jawlines, drooping chins, tech neck and transforming tired, lacklustre complexions into skin that boasts a radiant glow.

Clean up your act

If you suspect you've seen a marked difference in how you've aged in the past year, chances are you're right. Some of us may have been working comfortably from home, but an uncertain future regarding your job, your mortgage and your family's health adds pressure, even subconsciously. Think increased cortisol levels and fewer endorphins. "This makes you age faster," says Hkeik. "Women aged 34 to 50 are getting closer to menopause with glowy collagen-enhancing oestrogen dropping, so if that's you, check your hormone levels to see if they're stable. That alone has a marked effect."

Cumpston pulls no punches when it comes to practicalities and says disciplined lifestyle habits are your fast-track to noticeable improvements. "Don't drink the night before a Zoom, otherwise be

prepared for sunken eyes and a swollen face. Make sure you're doing high-intensity exercise three to four times a week. And intermittent fast: this has a magical effect on the skin. No food after six in the evening, and make sure your diet is high in polyphenols because this increases the growth of beneficial bacteria in the gut, which produce compounds that have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects."

Tweak your skincare

Are you guilty of zoning out during a virtual meeting, distracted by pores the size of dinner plates and a lacklustre complexion? We hear you. Blame it on all that blue light from your screen. We already know it messes with our circadian rhythm and causes eye strain, but here's more bad news: add premature skin ageing, pigmentation and blotchy red patches to that list. "Research shows blue light (high-energy visible light) can actually penetrate deeper into the skin than UVA and UVB," says Andrea Moss, co-founder of the Liberty Belle Rx skincare range. Blue light has been proven to contribute to melasma, so first, make sure you sit your phone and computer screen to the lowest light setting possible, then apply a physical sunscreen with zinc oxide, even if you're staying indoors all day. "Make sure to also use antioxidant-rich skincare for extra protection," adds Moss. "Vitamin C, niacinamide, tocopheryl, resveratrol and caffeine will work to neutralise the oxidative stress of blue light." Moss' personal screen regimen comprises Liberty Belle Rx's Next Level Tri-C Brightening Serum with Pollution Protection, \$144, Superhero Antioxidant Moisturiser with Anti-Pollution & Blue Light Defence, \$138, and Superstar Physical Zinc SPF 50+ Broad Spectrum Zinc Physical Sunscreen, \$65.

If you're looking for an overall freshness boost, try adding a do-it-all serum that will brighten and plump up the skin and play down any lines at the same time. Three we rate: Rodan + Fields Total RF Serum, \$239, which has an antioxidant combo and calcium to visibly firm skin; SkinCeuticals C E Ferulic, \$228, which has potent doses of vitamin C and E in a lovely emollient base that's ideal for drier complexions; and Clarins Double Serum, \$152, a winner for combination types because it brightens and hydrates the dry cheek area without being too heavy if you're oily in the T-zone.

Get trigger happy

All those hours gazing down at screens probably mean you're now living with tech neck — those lines on your neck you've never noticed before. "Hydration, hydration, hydration," says Cumpston. "This area is highly vulnerable to loss of collagen, so you also need to ensure it's well protected." Cumpston is a fan of the Aussie sunscreen Ultraviolette

Queen Screen SPF 50+ Luminising Serum Skinscreen, \$47, for an instantaneous topical fix as it delivers a heavy dose of glow which is more flattering on camera.

But back to the hydration factor. Cumpston's go-to for plump skin is Beauty Boost, a treatment whereby skin is precisely "stamped" with a gun-type tool containing nine hypodermic needles that deliver Redensity1. What's that? "It's a hyaluronic acid with 10 amino acids and antioxidants, including glutathione," he explains. "The delivery is similar to needling in that you're creating these micro-injuries, which boost your collagen production over time, but you're injected at a precise depth so it's far more effective than traditional needling."

Treatments last for about 30 minutes, and you'll definitely be a little bit bloody, bruised and bumpy after, so allow for about three days to heal, and schedule follow-up treatments three to four weeks apart.

Injectable moisturisers, or "moisture jabs", have a runnier, more free-flowing texture than dermal fillers and can also brighten dark under-eye circles, re-plump dry décolletage and soften crepeiness on the back of hands. "These hyaluronic acid hydrators help to hold water in the skin and give you a dewiness," says Hkeik. "They deliver a lifting and volumising effect rather than the static effect a filler has. And many have multivitamins your skin benefits from and that you'd never be able to get from taking a tablet. They help your skin perform better."

Lift your game

Some doctors will advise on tackling necklines with a really soft filler (Hkeik uses a diluted blend of two), but you'll need an experienced injector, otherwise the results can be uneven. Another approach is to focus on the neck (our term of endearment for the jaw/neck area) instead. "Sometimes, to fix the neck, you need to focus on the face instead," says Hkeik. "I like to lift the face with a liquid facelift, which is simply a reconstruction with filler. I place a little in the cheeks, some below the nose in the nasolabial fold and some in the chin to project it forward again. This projection defines the face shape, which, in turn, pulls the skin of the neck up."

However you choose to play it, whether that's a tweak to your skincare regimen or seeking a trusted professional for one of the non-surgical options above, remember you can always turn the camera off. Just don't forget to unmute yourself.