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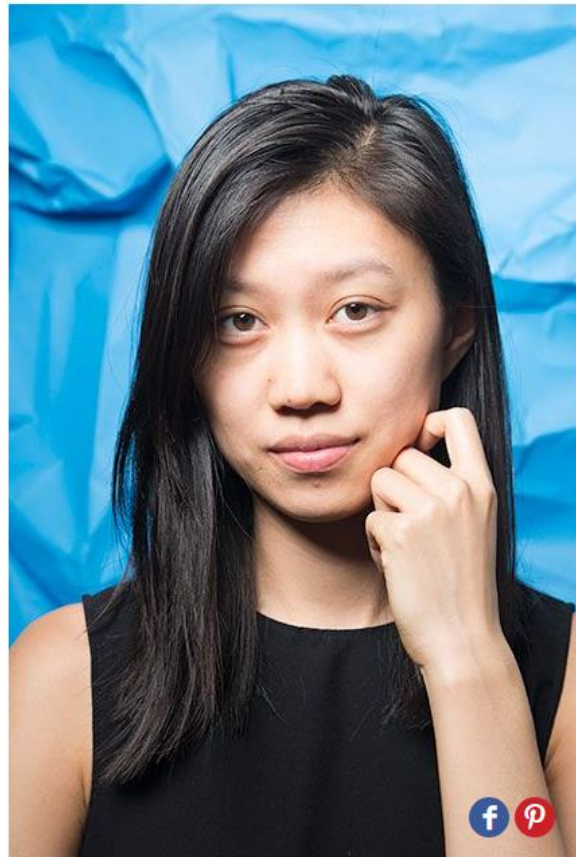
## I Slept 9 Hours A Day For Two Weeks — Here's What It Did To My Skin

"You look tired." It's a phrase those of us with dark circles and undereye bags are, well, really tired of hearing. Thanks to my erratic sleep schedule, stress dreams, and tendency to wake up every hour starting at 6 a.m. in an *oh-no-I-slept-through-my-alarm!* state of panic, my puffy undereyes have become a fact of life.

As you might imagine, concealer and I are in a very close, committed relationship. After applying my moisturizer and BB cream, I rely on cover-up to wake up my eyes and hide redness and small bumps elsewhere. On the rare days when I do go bare-faced, just about everyone, including my uncle one time, feels they have permission to comment on my tired-looking eyes and check in about my sleeping habits. But is sleep *really* the answer to my skin woes? I decided to test whether nine hours of sleep a night, for two weeks, would give my complexion a Sleeping Beauty-worthy glow.

For context, this is what I looked like without any makeup before I started the experiment. My beauty routine consisted of cleansing with [Simple's micellar water](#), exfoliating with a honey-cinnamon scrub, and moisturizing with [Belif's Aqua Bomb](#). I followed that trio with an acne-spot treatment where needed, and [Nuori's eye cream](#).

At this point, I was sleeping roughly five to six hours a night during the week, but my weekends could vary wildly, depending on the day's schedule. I was dealing with stress around planning a trip to Chicago and trying to get all my work done in time. Suffice it to say, my skin was not happy, and it was showing up in the form of dark circles and pimples that weren't going away. If there was ever a good time to try my sleep experiment, this was it.



I headed to Chicago for my vacation, where I found sleeping nine hours a night to be a piece of cake. Sometimes, I even hit 10! But when I got back to NYC three days later, I realized it wasn't going to be so easy. For one thing, I live on the Upper East Side, a neighborhood notorious for nighttime construction. When I would crash into bed at 1 or 2 a.m., I would be so exhausted that I could fall asleep despite the sound of jackhammers. On my nine-hour plan, that didn't work.

So I set about making my space as sleep-inducing as possible. I played my Naturespace music just a little louder, sprayed lavender room spray, and bought a new pillow (this is an area to splurge a little). I also made a habit of reading (currently, Heather Havrilesky's *How to Be a Person In the World*) instead of staring at my phone screen before bed. All these small changes added up to make unwinding at the end of the day a calming, almost meditative, routine.



PHOTOGRAPHED BY COLLINS NAI.

On a day-to-day basis, it was hard to tell how my skin was changing, but when I looked at the “after” photos, I definitely saw the difference. My dark circles were lighter, my skin looked clearer and more hydrated, and the bumps and pesky pimples along my cheeks and jawline had disappeared.

Was I imagining these results? I called up dermatologist Paul Jarrod Frank, MD, of the 5th Avenue Dermatology Surgery and Laser Center, for some insight. “I’d like you to continue that forever,” Dr. Frank told me after I explained the experiment to him. “We use our sleep to heal, so the wear and tear of the environment has a much greater toll [on your skin] when you don’t sleep that much,” he said.

Not sleeping enough can exacerbate acne, dryness, and other skin problems, he told me, but sleeping the right amount helps your skin bounce back. So even though two pimples popped up during my experiment, they disappeared within a day with the help of an acne-spot treatment.

Still, I didn't always hit the magic number nine. A few nights, I woke up at 4 a.m. to jackhammers, punched my pillows in frustration, and fell asleep 10 minutes later; others, I ended up stressing out about my experiment to the point at which I couldn't fall asleep for hours. But for the most part, I felt less exhausted, more productive during the day, and trained my body to start waking up after eight-and-a-half hours, before my alarm.

My skin transformation, Dr. Frank told me, is just the beginning — *if* I keep up this nine-hour-a-night sleep schedule. “Do this for three months, and you'll never want to sleep less than that. You won't see dark circles as much anymore, your skin will look brighter and more youthful, and you'll have a bounce of hydration in your skin. People will look younger if they sleep more.”

Am I dedicated enough to try it out for three more months? Probably not. It's hard for me to forgo another episode on Netflix or a night out with friends to make sure I hit that 10 p.m. (okay, 11 p.m.) bedtime. But I *will* make a point to quit clicking aimlessly around the internet to delay going to bed, and I'll get my beauty sleep when I can — like on vacation. Maybe in a few months, I can start laying off the concealer, too.