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Extreme Lengths

What Some Washingtonians Will Go Through To Look Good From Head To Toe

By Kara Jesella
Special to The Washington Post
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Two years ago, no one had ever heard of lash extensions. Then a few celebrities -- Allison Janney of "The West Wing", Joy Lauren, who plays Danielle Van de Kamp on "Desperate Housewives" -- wore them to last year's Emmys. Their photos were featured in OK magazine, which claimed that stars loved fluttering the extra-long fringe. Gwen Stefani, Lucy Liu and Naomi Campbell were among those reported to have ditched mascara in favor of these newfangled falsies.

Having lash extensions applied is a daunting process: It takes anywhere from one to three hours and requires maintenance every two to four weeks. An entirely new set needs to be applied every two months. Still, it's not a surprise that such notoriously appearance-obsessed cities as New York and Los Angeles offer this service for a cool \$250 to \$500 a pop. What may be surprising is that dozens of salons in the Washington area do, too.

"D.C. is one of our hottest locations for training," says Jo Mousselli, the president of Xtreme Lashes, a company that trains aestheticians and cosmetologists to provide the service in salons and spas. There are seven Xtreme Lashes-certified locations in the District, 78 in Maryland and 36 in Virginia.

Many people may think life inside the Beltway is all about parsing the Scooter Libby trial and logging on to Wonkette. Surprise! Some Washingtonians are just as obsessed with Britney and Brangelina.

"It's the trickle-down effect," says Elizabeth Tanzi, a spokeswoman for the American Academy of Dermatology and co-director of the Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery. Although Tanzi says it's rare for Washingtonians to want to look as plasticized as some stars do, she thinks that celeb beauty practices have definitely made their mark. "Celebrities have had procedures that are covered by the media," she says. "And because of that, cosmetic procedures have gotten wider acceptance."

The demystification of celebrity beauty started with the launch of In Style magazine in 1994, then went into high gear with tell-all publications such as Us Weekly and Star. Now we're at the point when even the most out-there procedures are beginning to seem . . . normal. Botox? Teeth whitening? Hair extensions? For some image-conscious office workers, they are almost as necessary as a venti

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Anne Wayson gets lash extensions at Morgan Gerard Salon & Spa in Annapolis. (By Dennis Drenner For The Washington Post)

Change Your Look Without Breaking the Bank

Not everyone has a celeb's beauty budget, but that doesn't mean you can't get the star treatment at home. As beauty product reviewers for Trend Spotter, we're familiar with the DIY approach to looking good, so we signed up to try four extreme (yet relatively affordable) ways to get ready for your close-up.

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latte and a Metro pass.

"Botox takes 10 years off of a movie star's face. Fans want the same thing," says Sandra Read, another spokeswoman for the dermatology academy who has a private practice in the District.

Botox is an injectable substance that works by freezing facial muscles to temporarily erase wrinkles; Teri Hatcher infamously acknowledged once getting the shots on "The Oprah Winfrey Show." She's in good company: More than 3 million people received Botox treatments in 2005, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.


With celebrity exposure has come consumer demand, and more services at lower prices now exist. "It's not one of those things anymore where you couldn't get what so-and-so has," says Sasha Charmin Morrison, the fashion director at Us Weekly. "You can."

Even if what so-and-so has is Botox injections in her foot for extra cushioning -- one of the newer treatment requests at Georgetown's Hela Spa, which also injects the substance into clients' underarms to prevent sweating.

Other celeb favorites being embraced by Washingtonians? Teeth whitening -- the top procedure requested by patients ages 40 to 60 in past American Dental Association surveys -- and hair extensions.

Great Lengths, one of the largest manufacturers and distributors of hair extensions, says its sales to U.S. salons have increased 35 to 50 percent each year since 2000. Demian Isla buys extensions for his eponymous salon in the District -- all the better to give clients a more subdued version of the down-to-there tresses popularized by Jessica Simpson and Paris Hilton.

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