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The Enthusiast

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FASHION

DON'T RAISE YOUR BROWS OVER THIS

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Without a doubt, eyebrows are an important — but endlessly frustrating — facial feature. (I myself am one of countless overly zealous women who have plucked theirs to oblivion, aiming for the perfect arch and instead looking like a permanently shocked Marilyn Manson.) Caring for them can feel like a career, especially for those with thin brows.

Help is here: Microblading is the newest way to achieve a fuller, bushier look. Here, the skin is numbed with a drug like lidocaine, and the brow is filled out by etching with a needle-outfitted blade (picture an Exacto knife) with iron-oxide pigments at the dermal layer — think less invasive tattoo. Color is chosen through careful consultation with the client, and the semi-permanent brows usually last 18 months. Long enough to put down the pencil but hardly a lifetime commitment.

Microblading isn't always about simple vanity, says Lori Phoenix, a nurse who performs the treatment at plastic surgeon Joseph Russo's Newton office. And it's not just for women, either.

"Men come in who might have undergone chemotherapy or who suffer from alopecia. I have a patient who's 15 with trichotillomania [the compulsion to pull out one's hair]. Some people are undergoing menopause or have a thyroid condi-

tion," she says.

Of course, others just want to look like Cara Delevingne (pictured).

Besides physicians, spas perform the procedure, too. Julie Michaud, co-founder of well-loved Back Bay spa Prettyology, was one of the first estheticians in town to offer the service.

"We're in a brow craze now. Brows are in, thanks to social media," she says. Indeed, prowling for "#microblading" on Instagram reveals more videos about stray hairs than you'd ever suspect. In the past month, several well-known beauty magazines like Cosmopolitan and Marie Claire have even run personal essays

from women who braved the procedure. Spoiler alert: They loved it.

And while insurance doesn't cover the treatment — which runs about \$650 at Russo's office or \$610 at Prettyology — the payoff is priceless.

"It's about emancipation, more than about a certain brow that [clients] want," says Phoenix.

"I have a patient who used to carry a brow pencil in her pocket and touch it up throughout the day. This is liberation from the brow."

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