



On the line

Compass reviews two alternative skin rejuvenating treatments

AS THE SKIN AGES IT LOSES collagen, elastin, natural moisturizing factors and fat, all of which keep it firm and supple. Tiny weaknesses in the skin appear and wrinkles then develop, with other factors such as smoking, sun exposure, diet and general health also affecting its quality. Facial muscle action also contributes to fine lines and wrinkles, with frown lines and jowls developing more profoundly.

Over the last 20 years botulinum toxin (better known by the brand Botox) has become one of the most popular cosmetic treatments for facial lines and wrinkles in the UK. It works by temporarily blocking nerve impulses to muscles that cause lines to form as the facial muscles contract, and, while it's highly effective for 'active' lines such as those caused by frowning or facial movement, 'static' lines can often be better treated with a different approach.

For some the idea of injecting directly into the muscles themselves is off-putting, with fears about 'frozen' features a common concern. That's why more natural treatments for lines and wrinkles are becoming increasingly popular. Compass reviews two of the best.

Working from the inside out: Acu-facelift

Acu-facelift involves the painless application of hair-thin needles into acupuncture points which have energy connections to the face, boosting blood and lymph flow, improving muscle tone and tightening pores while also balancing stress and hormones. Facial revitalization acupuncture is not a new treatment. Records show that as early as AD 960 facial acupuncturists were employed for the empress and the emperor's concubines in ancient China.

What happens during a treatment?

As with all acupuncture which works on the basis that the whole body must be in tune to treat a single area, a detailed consultation precedes treatment, with questions about lifestyle, diet and medical history. Tiny needles are then inserted in to key acupuncture energy points across the face.

Does it hurt?

These ultra-fine needles are totally different to those used for injections and blood tests. When an acupuncture needle is inserted it often tingles or creates a tiny ache.

How long does the treatment take to work?

From your first session expect to see and feel an improvement. For the full benefits, a course of 12 treatments is recommended, with effects most noticeable and lasting on or around the seventh treatment. Thereafter regular monthly maintenance sessions are recommended.

How much do treatments cost?

Expect to pay around £65 per hour.

How can I get in touch with local Acu-facelift® practitioners?

Contact the British Acupuncture Council on Tel. 020 8735 0400; www.acupuncture.org.uk.