

FANCY A LIFT?

From osteopathy to acupuncture, many complementary therapies now promise to take years off your face without wielding the knife, says Josephine Fairley

As the party season looms, the idea of some kind of 'face-lift' becomes increasingly seductive. The face is where stress and tiredness leave their mark, creating puffiness, dark circles and furrowed brows, yet for most women, the scalpel is too drastic a solution and little is known about the long-term effects of Botox and collagen injections. So is there a natural route to taut skin?

Holistic facialists believe treating the face has an impact on the whole body, eliminating energy blockages and restoring the natural glow. As Emma Harde, who demonstrated her bio-energy facial techniques on Channel 4's 10 Top Teenager show, explains: 'Facial tension can lead to headaches and jaw pain.' Also, because many of us store stress in our jaw, this can prevent lymph draining from the face, reducing blood flow and causing fluid build-up and that grey appearance.

While most 'beauty facials' will unlock pores and slough off dull skin cells, a true natural face-lift goes way beyond that. It was biodynamic skincare brand Dr Hauschka that pioneered the holistic facial, which incidentally clears the mind as well as the skin. The two-hour treatments start at the feet and by the time the therapist gets to your face, your 'to do' list will be history.

I've long been a devotee of facial acupuncture for an instant 'lift' before important events. And according to London-based facial-rejuvenation acupuncturist Alex Maas, 'It helps manipulate movement of chi energy, improving health and vitality'. For 30-somethings, the 'acuface-lift' can help keep ageing at bay – while people over 50 can see five to 15 years of ageing erased.

Meanwhile, other complementary therapists are moving into 'holistic facials'. Anastasia Achilleos – facialist to stars including Sade Frazier and Kate Moss – combines reflexology with acupuncture for treatments that seem to melt away the years. The Alexander technique is becoming increasingly popular for its face-freshening benefits. 'As we let go of long-held facial tension patterns, we can look younger,' says Alexander expert Noel Kingsley.

Even osteopathy is getting a look in. Vicky Vlachonis, an osteopath at the Integrated Medical Centre in London, plumps out the lower face by releasing tongue muscles – uncomfortable, but hugely effective. Salon treatments are also evolving,

including CACT's 'non-surgical face-lift', which uses a mild electrical current to stimulate facial muscles and circulation, and Guinoc's new Hydradermie LA Facial, which uses gentle stimulation to contract and tone the face.

If trying to fit in a treatment is going to send your Pain Pilot into meltdown, the good news is that there are many effective instant face-walkers you can try at home (see box).



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