

My favourite face-savers



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Banish wrinkles without resorting to fillers

I know you should never knock what you haven't tried, but I don't like fillers. I could happily dedicate this entire magazine to explaining why, but since space is short I'll get to the point: Heidi Montag from the reality series *The Hills*. I rest my case.

That said, I'm not mad about having a face like a crumpled paper bag, either. Happily, there are alternatives. Principally, facial acupuncture, facial massage and a relative newcomer, facial reflexology. All pursue the same basic goal: to improve blood flow to the facial tissues, and in so doing reinvigorate skin and muscle, drain toxins, reduce puffiness and iron out areas of tension. To a greater or lesser extent, they all produce excellent results. They also have a unique advantage over fillers: they make you feel relaxed and happy. I defy anyone to say the same of Botox.

First stop, then, Neville in Belgravia (nevillehairandbeauty.net). This is a busy, buzzy salon, full of fabulously glamorous women – and me. Luckily, Paolo Lai, resident reflexologist, whisks me downstairs, straight past the Anya handbags and Gina heels, into the safety of a tiny, perfumed cubicle.

It is hard to describe the sheer pleasure of this facial treatment (£120; 90 minutes), but I shall try. There is rosehip oil and a gentle, hypnotic pressure; there is kneading; there is a wonderful feeling of lightness and a drifting off to sleep. I am woken by my own gentle snoring, which Lai politely ignores. It is done. My face is tingling, warm, alive with vitality. I sit up, look in the mirror. My skin is bright and dewy, the persistent wrinkle between my brows faded almost to nothing.

At Fortnum & Mason's beauty rooms (fortnumandmason.com), among the Bronnley soaps and silk curtains, is acupuncturist Annee de Mamiel. Her autumn facial (£195; 90 minutes) is a wonderfully warming, nurturing experience, designed to prepare the skin for the rigours of winter. We start with a few balancing needles in the feet, hands and legs. On the face, it's about a dozen pins, painlessly and swiftly placed. Afterwards, de Mamiel applies warming poultices, soothing pressure-point massage with her fragrant Autumn Facial Oil and a deliciously silky honey mask. I leave looking noticeably less jowly, the puffiness around my eyes gone.

Finally, Pure Massage (puremassage.com) and the expert fingers of Beata Aleksandrowicz, whose talent is legendary among beauty mavens. Her newest treatment, Total Face (£135; 60 minutes), is a synthesis of all she has learnt in her many years as a therapist, a combination of deep-tissue massage and reflexology. The level of relaxation and the subsequent serenity it produces are remarkable. By releasing pent-up stress, Aleksandrowicz coaxes the facial muscles out of all their bad habits, melting away areas of tension. Slowly, surely, the face you thought you'd never see again starts to peer back at you.

Banish wrinkles

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