



Needling by SKN Holistic Rejuvenation Clinic. Grooming by Anya Ellis for Lizbell Agency.

BEAUTY POINTS

Cosmetic acupuncture takes on the wrinkle.

by Alyssa Schottland-Bauman / photography by Clinton Hussey

Cosmetic acupuncture is a holistic approach to anti-aging that has recently captured the limelight. But it is far from new. Founded on Traditional Chinese Medicine, this form of healing dates back more than 3,000 years. At the root of acupuncture is the energy life force qi (pronounced *chee*), and it is said, "Where the qi goes, the blood flows." When balanced, qi flows freely along channels called meridians, blood circulates evenly, and organs are in an optimum state. Disease, stress, and discomfort are imbalances in the body indicative of a qi blockage. Acupuncture cures by targeting the imbalances naturally. Hairline needles are inserted into some of the 1,000 predetermined acupuncture points to rebalance qi. Each point is aligned with a specific organ, which has been mapped out and verified over thousands of years. Results are not immediate, so patience is key.

We all know aging is inevitable, but according to Amanda Beisel, a registered acupuncturist specializing in skin, and the owner of Vancouver's SKN Holistic Rejuvenation Clinic, "We can choose, direct, and even guide the speed at which we do. Lines developing on the face are simply a reflection of the aging process in the organs." Dark under-eye circles are caused by a weakened kidney qi; a pale and dull complexion is a result of a qi spleen deficiency. "By balancing out the whole system, the skin becomes nourished and its natural health surfaces," explains Beisel. She believes that cosmetic acupuncture is the "only true anti-aging medicine because it works intrinsically from the inside out. Boosting the internal system increases external results." After one treatment, skin will appear brighter, and lines sligher. But long-lasting results come after the recommended six to 12 treatments. Expect to see fuller cheeks, relief of under-eye circles, diminished fine lines, a reduced appearance of wrinkles, a more radiant and youthful appearance, reduced pore size, brighter eyes, improved collagen production and muscle tone, and a lifted brow. Beisel advises maintenance treatments every six weeks or whenever a "freshening up" is due.

Although cosmetic acupuncture has experienced a surge in popularity, and myriad clinics offer the service, there are only a few spas in the country that make it available. In Toronto, it's offered at the Aroma Wellness Clinic and Spa, the Rejuvenation Room, and the Sage Health & Wellness

clinic. In Vancouver, SKN is the only spa that addresses anti-aging concerns with cosmetic acupuncture incorporating exotic spa treatments like jade and ginseng facials using skin-care products made from organic jade powder.

At SKN, Beisel does an intense health assessment before any session. The rate at which organ essences deplete is dependent upon individual lifestyle, so she inquires about sleep, diet, exercise, and overall health. Requests get personal. Yes, sticking out the tongue for evaluation is definitely an awkward moment. But it is a telltale sign of what's happening inside. Tongue colour, texture, and coating mirror what is going on internally and help Beisel customize the treatment.

"Cosmetic acupuncture is a softer approach to aging, with a deeper emphasis on wellness," says registered acupuncturist Pardeep Dherari. Specializing in cosmetic acupuncture at the Arbutus Clinic in Vancouver, Dherari is a firm believer that beauty comes from within. "Cosmetic acupuncture is far from Botox, where results are purely superficial, making everyone look kind of kitty-cattish," he explains. "Meridians begin and end on the face and by first treating the underlying problems, beautifying results are simply responses to synchronicity brought back to the body."

After I'm given a health assessment at the Arbutus Clinic, I lie down and give my face up to his mercy. After inserting 10 tiny needles into the feet, knees, and shins, Dherari firmly rolls my cheeks and jaw line and pins skin back behind the ears. He inserts 60 to 75 needles into my face, scalp, and ears. Aside from a few sensitive pricks, the entire 25-minute procedure is virtually painless. "Just relax," he instructs. That's likely, as I stay stiff, still with a face full of needles. "Extracting needles are as important as placement," he points out. "Slow and precise to avoid any bruising."

Dherari finishes up the treatment with a brisk facial massage. I feel relaxed and energized. My complexion is even. Laugh lines have faded, lines on the forehead have smoothed and any evidence of my sleepless night has vanished. I like how I look and love how I feel. It's hard to believe, I know, but six treatments later, I'm hooked. This age-old approach is my modern day answer to visage fatigue. ☺