

How Hollywood is turning back the clock

A new acupuncture treatment claims to have similar effects to a facelift. But can it really erase your wrinkles or is it just a celebrity fad?

Facial rejuvenation acupuncture is said to be the secret beauty weapon of a string of A-list stars, including Madonna, Demi Moore and Gwyneth Paltrow. According to one source, Gwyneth is so keen she has twice-weekly sessions.

A cheaper and safer alternative to Botox and cosmetic surgery, practitioners claim that facial rejuvenation acupuncture can get rid of under-eye bags, crow's feet, jowls, wrinkles and facial marks without risk. The cons? None, it seems. So the treatment is ideal if you can't bear to inject toxins into your body, are squeamish about going under the knife or shudder at the thought of post-operative scars and bruising.

Photos: Eusebio Medeiros/Photo Agency/Corbis/Out

Facial rejuvenation acupuncture is based on a healing system that has been practised in China for thousands of years. In a session lasting around 50 minutes, a therapist will inject long, thin needles into your face which, practitioners say, will manipulate your body's energy (qi), boost circulation, help the lymphatic system drain away toxins and bring fresh blood to your face.

Unlike most facial treatments, it's not just your appearance that gets a lift: the underlying causes of the ageing process – the damage done to your organs through stress, lifestyle and pollution – are also treated.

It sounds great, but does it really work? We sent **Now's** deputy picture editor Carol Hendry, 35, to visit practitioner Amanda Cox and find out...

"I've always avoided the sun and tried to be careful about my looks," says Carol. "I'm aware that if you're blonde and have pale skin, like I do, you can end up looking like an old bag if you spend time in the sun. I use sunscreen religiously, but I've still noticed the crow's feet around my eyes deepening and lines appearing on my forehead. Also, when I have my period I feel 10 years older and my skin dries out. I don't smoke, but I drink socially and I'm sure that doesn't help.

"I'm not against cosmetic surgery, but people can take it too far and end up with a horrid stretched look. I prefer a holistic approach, so I leapt at the chance to try facial rejuvenation acupuncture. I figured it could only help, although I didn't have huge expectations.

"I booked in for five treatments – the bare minimum. I turned up at the first session feeling frazzled as I'd rushed straight from work, plus I was in the middle of moving house. But Amanda was so lovely and calm I instinctively trusted her. We chatted about the areas I wanted



Demi Moore and Madonna are both said to be fans of facial rejuvenation acupuncture.



Gwyneth Paltrow is rumoured to be so keen on the treatment she has twice-weekly sessions



stimulate acupuncture points and the warmth felt heavenly. To top it all off, she gave me a soothing facial massage with oil.

"When the treatment was finished, I felt floaty and relaxed. Over the next few weeks of treatment, friends commented on my glowing complexion. I also slept brilliantly after each session, which also made me look better.

"The verdict? After five sessions I feel like I've had a health MOT. My complexion is clear and calm, I feel energised and the lines on my forehead have gone. My crow's feet have lessened, but I'd need more treatment for them to disappear totally. If money was no object, I'd definitely have more sessions. As a holistic experience, I give facial rejuvenation acupuncture top marks. ■

Jini Reddy

a light electric current into them. The needles were then inserted around my face to stimulate and tone the facial muscles. I'd compare the sensation to a buzzing, but it wasn't unpleasant.

"The treatment isn't just about needles – there's some gorgeous pampering, too. Amanda ran a Derma Roller – which is Chinese in origin – over my face. It's a little textured wheel that smoothes out the lines. Bliss! She massaged my face with a Japanese Tiger Warmer, a metal tube with a stick burning inside it. It's said to



After five treatments, our tester Carol found her skin looked clearer and brighter, plus the lines on her forehead had gone