Beauty Is More Than Just Skin Deep - Cosmetic Acupuncture Takes Whole Body Approach to Rejuvenation

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Asheville, NC (PRWEB) December 9, 2004 - Move over, Botox and liposuction. At a time when consumers are bombarded with miracle cures that promise to restore a youthful appearance, cosmetic acupuncture is an age-old solution that really works.

“The procedures used in cosmetic acupuncture are drawn from Chinese texts that have been in existence for thousands of years,” says Lorraine Harris L.Ac., North Carolina’s only practitioner trained in the Mei Zen method of cosmetic acupuncture. “We take a whole-body approach that produces more youthful and toned skin without the use of drugs, surgery or electrical stimulation. It works remarkably well on the face and abdomen.”

A normal course of treatment entails two one-hour sessions per week for five weeks. During treatment, tiny, hair-width needles are inserted into specific points just under the skin’s surface to stimulate elastin and collagen production and improve muscle tone. With facial acupuncture, fine lines begin to disappear, deep lines get smoother, and broken capillaries improve, as do skin conditions such as acne and rosacea.

Because acupuncture is based on the idea that optimal health is achieved when the body’s systems are in balance, there are other benefits from treatment as well. For example, women who choose facial acupuncture can expect reduced depression and less anxiety, better digestion and sleep cycles, and fewer hot flashes and night sweats. Those who opt for abdominal acupuncture are likely to benefit from increased fertility and/or sex drive.

The technique is gaining popularity, and there is evidence that it works. A study published in the International Journal of Clinical Acupuncture showed that of 300 people who received facial acupuncture, 90 percent saw marked results after their first course of treatment.

From a consumer standpoint, one of the most attractive features of cosmetic acupuncture is its cost, which is a fraction of most other forms of cosmetic enhancement. And, it is a relatively pain-free procedure that involves no swelling or recovery time.

“Mei Zen cosmetic acupuncture is an excellent choice for those who want to reclaim their radiance from the inside out,” says Harris. “Bringing the systems of the body back into harmony is the most effective way to rekindle the spirit of our youth.”
Acupuncture gets a face lift and much more
By Olivia Barker, USA TODAY

In their never-ending quest to combat sags, bags and lines, age-conscious Americans are turning their bodies into pincushions.

Forget the knife and syringe. The tool of choice for a growing number of wrinkle-phobes is a needle — scores of them.

Cosmetic acupuncture practitioners and patients swear by the results: Foreheads are smoothed, tummies tucked, breasts lifted and double chins become single once again. And as tales of botched Botox injections spread — the lawsuit filed by a sickened Beverly Hills socialite; at least four Botox recipients now seriously ill with botulism — acupuncturists say their non-toxic technique is proving ever more alluring.

"A lot of women are just afraid," says Martha Lucas, who says the number seeking treatment has quadrupled since she opened her Denver practice three years ago. (Lucas guesses that the number going under the needle nationally constitutes a "small fraction" of the more than 128,000 Americans who, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, had face lifts in 2003.) "They don't want to take the chance they're going to come out not only with an ice bag on but with some potentially more serious side effect."

And there's the argument that cosmetic acupuncture, like traditional acupuncture, takes a holistic approach to treatment, so not only do eyebrows unfurrow, but "you feel better overall," says Christine Kleinschmidt, who practices in St. Louis. "You're sleeping better, you've got more energy and better digestion. ... It's not just skin-deep."

Physicians find the fountain-of-youth claims far-fetched. "To be fair, most people look better after a good night's sleep, after a vacation or after being outside in fresh air, so I'm not saying there can't be some benefit," says ASPS president Scott Spear. But "I personally have not seen any evidence that cosmetic acupuncture has any significant or long-term benefits."

Lucas' protocol of 10 treatments over five weeks goes for $1,200, less than one-quarter of the cost of the average face lift, although the results, which Lucas says last three to five years, are far from permanent. Each session takes 45 to 60 minutes and involves 60 to 70 needles. Kleinschmidt charges $1,800 for a typical course of 12 treatments, not including monthly or bimonthly maintenance sessions.

MaryAgnes Klock calls Lucas a "miracle worker." The Dallas resident says her jowls are gone, her eyelids aren't drooping, and she has dropped 35 pounds. Klock, who works in sales, won't divulge her age, but she will say that the other day someone guessed she was 40.

Acupuncturists say that while business is busy for weddings and holidays, the future lies in preventive procedures.

"I wish I'd known," Klock says. "I would have had it done in my 30s."
Cosmetic Acupuncture: Forget Surgery, Try Needles

Acupuncture Increases Blood Flow, Produces More Collagen

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SAN DIEGO -- The quest for youthful beauty takes women down many paths. Some go under the knife to erase the signs of time, but for 50-year-old Liz Edwards that wasn't an option.

"I'm not interested in surgical procedures, even though it's the norm in California, Southern California. I'm just not prepared to go that route yet," Edwards said. Instead, she turned to an ancient beauty ritual -- cosmetic acupuncture.

"It's new in America, but it's been around for thousands of years. Earliest times are since the Sung Dynasty, where the empress and the emperor's concubines were using facial rejuvenation acupuncture to beautify themselves," Body Evolution Wellness Center acupuncturist Marc Sklar said.

Sklar started practicing what he calls facial rejuvenation acupuncture a year and a half ago. He is one of only a handful of people in San Diego County performing it.

"It's a painless, safe, non-invasive, non-surgical procedure that reduces the aging process and revitalizes the body and face," he said.

The process works by stimulating nodes and pathway vessels. Blood flow is increased, stress is reduced, muscles are stimulated and the body produces more collagen, according to Sklar.

"I usually start with needles in the body and ears to help prep the body. You like to ground it," he said. Treatments take about an hour and Sklar said patients notice results, like a brighter complexion and reduced lines, by the 7th session.

"I'm threading it right underneath the line itself, by threading it under the line it's pushing it up, the needle is raising it up," Sklar said.

The process can be so relaxing that some people fall asleep on the table.

Although cosmetic acupuncture is common in places such as Japan, Hong Kong and Sweden, it's only taken hold locally over the last five years.

Edwards first heard about it in magazines.

"I actually had seen some articles that Madonna had done it. I think Demi Moore is another one that may have done it," Edwards said.

After 12 treatments, Edwards said she is happy with her results.

"It was like night and day. My face was brighter. I would walk into the gym or local areas and people would say, 'what have you done,'" Edwards said.
The results are not as drastic as surgery, but Edwards believes the acupuncture, combined with exercise and good nutrition, is toning down the ticks of the clock on her appearance.

Sklar charges $99 for one treatment.

Source: www.10News.com
Acupuncture gaining ground as alternative to face-lift

Paula Scardamalia has pins in her face – nine tiny ones angling out near her eyes, mouth and jaw.

The pins were poked in to tighten chin skin and erase lines on the 52-year-old woman’s face. The practice, called facial acupuncture, is becoming popular as a sort of holistic alternative to trying to turn back time with toxins or surgery. “This has got to be healthier than Botox or a surgical face-lift,” said Scardamalia.

Interest in facial acupuncture might be connected to the rising popularity of alternative medicine, or to society’s obsession with youth and beauty, or to the mass of aging baby boomers. Whatever the reason, acupuncturists report a wave of interest in the ancient Chinese practice. “It’s very hot,” said Mary Elizabeth Wakefield, a New York City practitioner whose facial work now consumes about three-quarters of her practice.

Acupuncturists typically stimulate selected points on the body with hair-thin pins to promote good health and alleviate pain. They view it as correcting energy imbalances along the body’s “meridians,” which carry an energy flow called qi (pronounced “chee”) – a concept many mainstream physicians say lacks scientific evidence.

In facial acupuncture, needles are usually stuck in wrinkles and sags to bring more blood, qi and muscle tone to an area. The theory, in a nutshell, is that a healthy face is a better-looking face.

While millions of Americans have had acupuncture treatments, the practice has never been fully embraced by the American medical establishment. The American Medical Association has no position on it.

Some medical professionals are dubious. Stephen Barrett, a retired psychiatrist who runs the Quackwatch Web site, compares faith in qi and meridians to believing in ghosts. “I can’t think of any anatomical reason why needles in the face would affect wrinkles,” he said. ap
Acupuncture: The New Facelift?
Can those tiny little needles really get rid of your wrinkles?

By Carol Sorgen
WebMD Feature

Reviewed By Brunilda Nazario, MD
on Friday, January 21, 2005

Jawline getting a big saggy? That great sense of humor of yours leaving you with some not-so-funny laugh lines? Furrowed brow making you look like you're in a perpetual state of grouchiness?

If you're thinking of getting a little work done on your face, a younger-looking face may lie at the end of some needles -- acupuncture needles, that is.

Can acupuncture really give you the face you thought you'd lost forever? Yes, say the acupuncturists who offer the procedure. Not really, say more conventional cosmetic surgeons.

Smoothing Out the Lines

Martha Lucas, PhD, LAc, a Colorado acupuncturist, says after a series of 10 treatments (twice a week for five weeks), skin becomes more delicate and fair, and there are fewer wrinkles. She says the treatments also result in an erasing of fine lines and a reduction of deeper lines, less sagginess, a lifting of droopy eyelids, and a clearing or reduction of age spots. And, as an added bonus, she says, there is an overall rejuvenation that is not confined to your face.

"Cosmetic acupuncture is a good alternative for women who don't want the side effects associated with a surgical facelift," Lucas says.

The procedure works for men too, says Lucas, although not as many men request it.

Acupuncture, a form of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), is designed to free up chi, or energy. When the needles -- approximately 30-40 -- are applied to the body and face, production of collagen and elastin may be stimulated, says Lucas, and skin is "plumped up."

By addressing other parts of the body in addition to the face, acupuncture assists the body's ability to support the "facelift."

Making the Entire Body Younger

"We're helping you to be younger -- and look younger -- by improving your energy from the inside out," Lucas explains. "This still is TCM -- it's not just about the face; it's about the whole body."

"Chinese medicine is the true antiaging medicine," Lucas says. "It helps your own body create a more youthful appearance."

Lucas has been offering this procedure for approximately four and a half years, and last year she began training other acupuncturists in cosmetic acupuncture throughout the United States and Canada. As the procedure gets more publicity, she says, more clients are requesting it, increasing the need for acupuncturists trained in the technique, which requires special acupuncture points and different needling techniques than traditional acupuncture.
Cosmetic acupuncture is not for everyone, says Lucas. Though acupuncture has been used to help people with migraines, seizure disorders, or high blood pressure, for example, these people are probably not good candidates for cosmetic acupuncture. For most people, however, Lucas says, acupuncture “lifts” are a great alternative for those who don't want more drastic procedures.

Columbia, Md. acupuncturist Della Aubrey-Miller, MAc, LAc, was trained in facial rejuvenation acupuncture, another form of cosmetic acupuncture, which she says is also effective in smoothing out lines, erasing shallow lines, and softening deeper furrows. Still, she says, like surgery, the effectiveness of the treatment depends on what you're starting with. "Working on a 40-year-old face is different from a 60-year-old face," she says. For that reason, both she and Lucas suggest starting the treatments when you’re in your 30s, or 40s at the latest.

Increasing Energy

What cosmetic acupuncture does, says Aubrey-Miller, is "stir the energy pot." Moving energy through the body, with needles not only in the face but also the feet, legs, arms, head, and ears, stimulates collagen production and brings blood to the face.

Aubrey-Miller's recommended course of treatment is 12 to 16 weeks, with monthly maintenance treatments after that. "It's something useful to do for yourself," she says, and you don't have to worry about recovering from surgery or side effects such as bruising or nerve damage. For many of her clients, it's also a mini-vacation of sorts. "For many people, this is the only quiet time they spend on themselves. Usually, once the needles are in, they just fall asleep for 30 minutes."

Not a Cure-all

Cosmetic acupuncture is not a cure-all, Aubrey-Miller emphasizes. "How you live your life will impact what your face looks like," she says. "You can't correct a bad lifestyle with needles."

Another nonsurgical facelift is also attracting attention. The PanG nonsurgical facelift is a series of office-based treatments that apply radiofrequency energy, high voltage galvanic electric current, and high frequency ultrasound to produce "facelift-type" effects on the soft tissues of the face and neck. It takes 20 treatments over 10 weeks to produce these effects, says R. Stephen Mulholland, MD, of Toronto. "This is like body building for the face," says Mulholland.

Mulholland admits that the treatment offers only about 30% of the effect of a conventional facelift. "You're getting a lift effect," he says. "But for best results, you would still want a facelift."

Can't Do It All

Rhoda Narins, MD, president of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery, says she thinks acupuncture has its place, especially as a pain reliever. But she doesn't believe in it as a replacement for cosmetic treatments such as surgery, Botox injections, and the like. "Acupuncture doesn't stop the muscle movement that creates lines," she says. "Botox does." Nor can acupuncture tighten or "fill" the skin as surgery or injectable fillers such as Restylane can.

Too many "extreme makeovers" on television are leading many of us to believe that a new look is a no-muss, no-fuss proposition. "That's just not the case," says Narins. "Changing your appearance is not something that should be taken lightly."