



Facial Acupuncture

Non-surgical rejuvenation

by Melissa Carr, DrTCM

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Facial or cosmetic acupuncture has been performed in China since the Sung Dynasty more than 1,000 years ago when it was performed on the Emperor's concubines, and has become a mainstream alternative to surgery and Botox.

In cosmetic acupuncture, very fine needles are inserted superficially into acupuncture points on the face to improve skin texture, smoothness, clarity, and tone.

The theory

To understand how cosmetic acupuncture works, it helps to understand how aging causes our skin to wrinkle and sag.

Over time recurring facial expressions, combined with a thinning of the skin and declining collagen production, cause muscles to leave their marks on our faces as wrinkles—the furrows between our eyebrows and those crow's feet at the outer corners of our eyes. Meanwhile other underused muscles begin to lose tone and sag, such as the areas around our jaw, chin, and neck.

The benefits

Facial acupuncture can increase local collagen production which fills in fine lines. The inserted needles also increase blood circulation, allowing for better delivery of nutrients to the face and elimination of waste and toxins away from the face. While the bony structure of the face is not changed, relaxing tight muscles and improving the tone of weak muscles causes the soft structure and shape of the face to be altered.

Some of the benefits of facial rejuvenation include an improvement in the firmness and moisture of skin; a tightening of the pores; a reduction in dark circles or puffiness under the eyes; a lifting of sagging skin, double chins, and drooping eyelids; and a healthy, glowing complexion.

The treatments

Generally, 10 to 12 sessions are recommended for one course of treatment, with each session lasting 60 to 90 minutes. Treatments are performed one to three times weekly with a day of rest in between multiple sessions. Some people notice a difference after just the first treatment, but most should notice results by the sixth or seventh treatment. Maintenance sessions are recommended, but the need varies from person to person.

Because the needles are so fine, acupuncture is not painful. It tends to feel like a tingling warmth or distension.

Facial rejuvenation treatments are generally a bit pricier than conventional acupuncture sessions as the acupuncturist must have extra training and the procedure takes longer. Sessions generally cost between \$100 and \$150 per treatment with many practitioners offering discount packages.

The side effects

Slight bruising can occur from the needles, but unlike surgery or other more invasive forms of treatment, facial rejuvenation acupuncture does not have a long recovery time.

Facial acupuncture can also be used to improve dermatological issues such as rosacea, acne, eczema, and other skin problems. Many practitioners also stimulate points on the body relating to the individual's constitution, resulting in some beneficial side effects that include increased energy, improved digestion, better sleep, and enhanced stress management.

Microcurrent stimulation

Are you afraid of needles? Not to worry. Another option is microcurrent stimulation. This device has two wands that are applied to various places on the face. The tiny current that communicates between the wands feels like a mild tingling or nothing at all, but it has a powerful impact.

Microcurrent stimulation uses a specific electrical current that reproduces our body's own natural current to re-educate the muscles, relax tight ones, and strengthen weak ones. The result is a more youthful appearance.

Qualifications

Because cosmetic acupuncture requires specific education, ask the practitioner you choose about his or her training. Alberta, BC, and Ontario license acupuncturists through regulatory boards which you can call to find a qualified and registered acupuncturist. Unfortunately, the other provinces do not have regulatory boards. Talk to other patients about their experience and whether they would recommend a practitioner.

Though I have been asked many times by patients whether I would do cosmetic acupuncture, my answer for a long time was no. I felt, and still do, that what's inside is much more important than outward appearance.

However, I have come to understand that what shows on the outside can also reflect one's inward state. When we feel good about the way we look, our health improves, just as feeling bad about our appearance can negatively impact our health. In addition, for some, taking that first step toward better health as a whole may actually begin with the motivation to look better.

Facial map

Traditional Chinese Medicine doctors use face reading to help in diagnosis because different areas of the face represent different internal organs and systems.

While facial maps differ, in general this is how the facial zones relate to the various organs:

- Area under eyes—kidneys
- Between eyebrows—liver, stomach
- Forehead—intestines, bladder, gallbladder
- Nose—lungs, heart
- Area between nose and lips— spleen, reproductive organs
- Cheeks—lungs, intestines
- Chin—reproductive organs, kidneys, bladder
- Jaw—stomach
- Lips—stomach, intestines
- Ears—kidneys

About the Author

Melissa Carr, DrTCM, wants to grow old gracefully but look as young and healthy as she now feels. activetcm.com

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