

Cook, zap, poke

The newest ways to a younger face — without leaving town

BY JULIE BEUN-CHOWN

Put your face in the box.” I have to admit, I hesitated. The box was actually a computerized digital camera called the Visia. It measures how crepe-y your skin is, counts your wrinkles, spots and pores and then, to complete your joy, compares how you’re aging compared to 100 other women of your vintage.

Don’t get me wrong. I’m all about gonzo journalism: I’ve clambered down the side of a heaving, rolling container ship in the Tasman Sea, inadvertently made the Crown Princess of Tonga blubber like a baby, and clutched hands with actress Fran Drescher (*The Nanny*) as we were seasick in a luxury cruiser one memorable Boxing Day.

But this counting-your-wrinkles carper was different. It unhappily reminded me of when my Grade 10 phys ed teacher measured our body fat in class. Comparing how aged I look next to 100 better-preserved 41-year-olds smelled of the same self-defeat.

Then, I got the results. Despite living in Australia for 11 years, my skin was in better shape than 90 per cent of those other women I was so worried about. But according to Bonnie Craig, medical esthetics manager at the Facial Surgery and Cosmetic Centre of Ottawa, aging overlooks no one.

“It’s universal,” Craig says. “Everyone has the same issues, which we call the three Ds: deflation, dyschromia (skin discolouring) and drooping. Some people age better and some take better care of themselves, but the three Ds will always happen.”

But we need not go gently into that good night. The days when a nip-and-

tuck was the only way to avoid inheriting your mother’s jowls are gone. Technology has taken over and Ottawa has the very latest in non-surgical cosmetic procedures.

VISIA AND ACCENT

Counter-intuitive as it may seem to count your wrinkles, Visia Complexion Analysis does give a baseline for future skin care and intervention. Depending on how damaged the skin, a typical analysis could include recommendations for wrinkle-smoothing Botox, glycolic peels, micro-dermabrasion or the hot, new treatment, Accent radio frequency therapy. It promises to tighten skin, increase collagen production and improve skin quality without surgery or anesthetic.

Relatively painless, the therapy works by aiming concentrated radio frequencies similar to microwaves at the inner skin or dermis with a hand-held unit. In the process, floppy, aging collagen heats up and realigns itself, pulling drooping skin back into place.

“As we get older, between nature, diet and sun exposure, we lose elasticity,” explains cosmetic facial surgeon Dr. Greg Antoniuk. “In surgery, we’d tighten that elastic band. With Accent, it tightens with heat. It gives a natural firming effect without the downtime.”

Although still relatively new — Canadian übermodel Linda Evangelista swears by the original version, Thermage — the technology has already improved, and now includes a cooling system that takes the edge off the minimal burning sensation some patients feel.



ASHLEY FRASER, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Bonnie Craig, esthetics manager of Facial Surgery and Cosmetic Centre demonstrates the Visia Complexion Analysis, which rates how your skin is aging.

Much less expensive compared to a full facelift (\$10,000) and with no significant side effects, radio frequency therapy is also less dramatic. Although there is immediate tightening, the real effect comes as collagen replenishes itself over time. And as with most non-surgical therapies, more than one session will be needed.

Cost: Visia analysis is usually included as part of a \$60 cosmetic consultation with Dr. Antoniuk; as a separate service, the price is \$50. Accent therapy costs \$1,500 for two treatments on the lower face and jowls or \$2,000 for a full facial at the Facial Surgery and Cosmetic Centre of Ottawa, 613-521-3223, face.ca.

FRACTIONATED LASER AND DERMAL FILLERS

Back in the '90s, when carbon lasers were first developed for cosmetic therapy, there was no mistaking those who partook: They had the distinctive, raw-faced glow of someone who'd put their face in a fire.

How things have changed.

"Refreshed. That's the word I use," says Dr. Karen Dover of the effects of fractionated laser therapy, the newest technology off the drawing board. "You look fresher, not angry or tired. It changes your look forever."

While laser is still widely used to remove hair or ablate surface skin to encourage rejuvenation, fractionated laser takes a different approach. It di-

rects micro-beams to 20 per cent of the deep dermis at a time, leaving the outer layer unscathed. New collagen forms beneath and, after five or six treatments, the entire area is treated.

"It can be used to photo-rejuvenate the face, neck, arms and hands. It affects wrinkles in the skin on a deeper level than non-ablative and Intense Pulsed Light lasers," explains Dr. Dover, who is the first to introduce the therapy to Ottawa at her sleek clinic on Carling Avenue at Parkdale.

Best suited for treating fine to medium wrinkles and dyschromia, and for tightening skin and improving tone, fractionated laser has a few key benefits: There's very little down time, minimal risk of infection and no need for anesthetics or sedatives.

Dermal fillers are less long-lasting, but can resculpt the face without a scalpel. New generation products like Restylane last for six months. Depending on where it's injected — in the mouth's "sad" creases, hollowed eyes or drooping cheeks — a filler provides internal support to recreate the apple-cheeked look of youth.

"The difference between a filler and a facelift is that a facelift will change your look, whereas a filler can recreate the face you had," says Dr. Dover, a surgeon at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute for 15 years. In May, she transitioned into laser and cosmetic medicine after studying with her brother, a renowned laser pioneer, Dr. Jeffrey Dover.

"I've often sensed surgery is the pin-



WAYNE CUDDINGTON, THE OTTAWA CITY

Dr. Karen Dover introduced fractionated laser therapy to Ottawa, which, she says, leaves the skin looking 'refreshed' instead of red like older treatments did.

nacle of art and science," she says, "and cosmetic medicine is a natural arena in which to explore this philosophy."

Cost: A consultation is \$75. Fractional laser treatment can start at \$200 per treatment, but prices vary considerably, depending on the area treated, the underlying cosmetic issues and the extent of treatment required. Fillers can start at \$325, again with considerable variability in cost.

Available at Dr. Karen J. Dover, MD, Laser and Cosmetic Medicine, 613-715-9900, kjd-md.com.

NON-NEEDLE ACUPUNCTURE

Forget the slings, arrows and pinpricks of aging: Non-needle cosmetic acupuncture promises to deflect them all. Touted by celebs Sandra Bullock, Susan Sarandon and Renee Zellweger as the natural way to reduce wrinkles and improve skin tone, cosmetic acupuncture takes the same principles of the traditional practice, but ditches the needles.

Like traditional acupuncture, non-needle or micro-current facial rejuvenation (MCFR) aims to keep the flow of life-force (chi) moving along the body's energy highways (meridians). If there's an energy traffic jam in the body, it'll show up in the face: a furrowed brow, nasal folds and bags under the eyes.

"I balance the body before I start,

check all the organs and treat the main points," says Greg Balchun, an MCFR practitioner and acupuncturist at Ottawa's Natural Health Centre. "The goal, when you treat the face, is to treat the whole body. But in the first hour session, you'll immediately notice fine lines are softened, the brow has been lifted and the face looks rejuvenated."

During treatments, Balchun places two hand-held devices on meridian points. A painless, low-level current runs through 32 facial muscles and, in effect, gently exercises them while stimulating blood flow and increasing energy circulation. Some units like Balchun's use fibre-optic colour therapy to boost the effect; others rely on essential oils.

"The therapy tightens up muscles under the skin, improves skin texture, clears up toxins and reduces circles under the eyes, without side effects," says Balchun, who counts several models, lawyers and doctors among his patients.

And they may well be on to something: Clinical trials at the University of Washington in 2003 found that micro-current boosted elastin fibres by 45 per cent, collagen by 10 per cent and blood circulation by 35 per cent.

Cost: Prices range from \$85 to \$145 an hour. Ten to 20 sessions may be needed. Available at the Natural Health Centre, 613-820-0421.

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ROD MACIVOR, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Non-needle acupuncture aims to keep your life energy flowing, and some consider it a 'natural' way to reduce wrinkles and improve skin tone.