



SOFT TOUCH

Want younger-looking skin? Here's the rub: Facial massage can firm, smooth and sculpt. TEXT: MALENA HARBERS

Whether it's a seaweed-based cream or a tofu-rich diet, the beauty secrets of the Far East have long held appeal for Western women. But it's only recently that their key anti-aging weapon has entered the spotlight. Facial massage—a series of hand manipulation techniques that relax muscles and increase circulation—has its roots in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and has been practised for more than 1,000 years to maintain health and beauty. Now, some of the biggest beauty brands are offering products that work best when coupled with specific massage techniques.

"The theory in TCM is that your facial appearance is a reflection of your body's internal condition," says Mary Xiumei Wu, a doctor of TCM and president of the Toronto School of Traditional Chinese Medicine. "For instance, a kidney deficiency can show up as deep, dark circles under your eyes." While massage alone won't treat internal health problems, when done regularly it can help relax the face and alleviate dullness, sagging and even frown lines.

Why, then, have we been ignoring our faces for so long? (After all, we think nothing of indulging in regular tension-melting body massages.) "The belief that you can harm the skin and increase aging with facial massage has only recently been contested," says Anastasia Achilleos, a London-based facialist who counts Kate Moss as one of her clients. "By not touching [your face], you're actually allowing it to remain stagnant, dull and sluggish."

Under pressure Some beauty brands, including Shiseido, promote massage as part of a daily

PERSONAL TOUCH

Not sure how to give yourself a facial massage? Celebrity facialist Anastasia Achilleos shares her top tips.

- Start by placing a warm cloth over your skin for a minute or two. "This gives your skin an extra dose of oxygen because the heat causes a rush of blood to your tissue," says Achilleos. (Skip this step if you're prone to rosacea.)
- Apply a cleanser, cream or oil and, using your fingertips, massage it all over your face in strong, circular movements. "Focus on areas that can look fatigued, like your jawline, the sides of your nose and around your mouth and forehead, where deeper lines start to accumulate."
- Reduce puffiness by using your fingertips (held horizontal to the face) to smooth the skin from the centre of your face outward.
- For more instructions on how to give yourself a facial massage, check out *The Face Lift Massage: Rejuvenate Your Skin and Banish Wrinkles* by Kundan and Narendra Mehta.

cleaning routine. Laura J. Goodman, a skin-science specialist for P&G Beauty, says that this idea is popular in Japan, where there is a major emphasis on taking care of your skin with a proper cleansing routine. "Massage is an important part of cleansing," she says. "It helps increase movement and circulation below the skin." SK-II offers a cream that's specifically formulated for massage alone and meant for use after cleansing; it glides easily over the skin instead of being fully absorbed. "This allows you to massage your skin more easily without stretching or pulling it," says Goodman.

your finger and gentler on delicate under-eye skin." Giorgio Armani's Crema Nera comes with a polished black obsidian stone that is designed to touch the face in vertical movements. Depending on whether you preheat it in hot water or cool it down in the freeze; it can relax or revive the skin.

Upper hand "The whole idea behind dynamic wrinkles—those caused by facial movement—is that when your muscles contract in the same direction, it causes wrinkles," says Dr. Jody Alpert Levine, a New York-based dermatologist. "I use Botox to get rid of and prevent wrinkles because it relaxes

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Other products come with tools to assist with your technique. The Eye Concentrate from La Mer is applied with a silver-tipped wand to help massage away dark circles and puffiness. "The applicator is key for seeing results," says Paul Tchinnis, director of research and development for Max Huber Research Labs. "It helps move pooled blood out of the area, and the metal's cooling effect increases micro-circulation. It's much smoother than

muscles and stops wrinkles from forming. Massage also relaxes facial muscles, though the effects are more subtle than with Botox." It helps decrease puffiness as well. "If you move the muscles and skin on your face, it increases blood flow, which brings oxygen and nutrients to the area," she says. "As [the lymph] flows away from the skin and back to the heart, it is, essentially, decongesting the skin."

From top: Olay Regenerist Micro-Sculpting Cream (\$35); L'Oreal Paris Dermo-Expertise Collagen Remodeler Contouring Moisturizer for Face and Neck (\$30); Giorgio Armani Crema Nera (\$310); Shiseido White Lucent Brightening Massage Cream N (\$60); Shiseido The Skincare Cleansing Massage Brush (\$26); La Mer The Eye Concentrate (\$205); SK-II Facial Treatment Massage Cream (\$120).