

Face up to it

To mark the launch of The Resident's new health and beauty column, Robin Capstick takes a look at the post Christmas complexion

CHRISTMAS CAME, THE GOOSE got fat. Unfortunately, he wasn't the only one. During the season of giving, most of us keep on taking and end up ballooning. Hiding Christmas cheer under a Joseph sheepskin coat might work temporarily, but the best way to take the emphasis off your body is to draw attention to your face. But is it possible to have a healthy complexion in the dead of winter?

My first stop was Michaeljohn on Albemarle Street for one of Amanda Birch's celebrated lymphatic drainage facials. Included in Vogue's 'forty people you need to make you beautiful' list, Amanda's hands have massaged some of the most fabulous faces in the world, so I assumed she'd have some answers. Blonde, beautiful and business-like, she's one of those treatment specialists who are their own best calling card. Like Elle Macpherson and underwear, Amanda was made to sell beauty. As I prepared to be poked and prodded, I kept imagining her squeezing all those celebrity spots (if only pores could talk).

My treatment began with a glycolic peel, stinging just enough to know it was working, followed by a steam clean, unearthing spots hidden since my fourteenth birthday. She then administered thirty minutes of pure heaven in the form of a lymphatic drainage massage ridding my face of toxins and impurities. Just as I was about to drift off, she slapped what felt like five inches of wet cement on my face, and instead of using the 'drying time' to sneak a fag, she stayed on to give the most amazing hair, scalp and neck massage. To my delight, she delivered all this in silence, far more enjoyable than talking with a mouth full of mask. An hour and a half later my face felt like it had come out of hibernation. Convinced after all this squeezing I'd resemble a pepperoni with extra capers, I was shocked not to see a single red splodge. Several people asked if I'd been on holiday, and although for what it cost I could have been, she's worth staying in London for.

Next stop was The Individual Wellbeing Clinic, for their Fitness Facial. This is a combined Mediwave and lift 6 treatment. Mediwave, the therapist explained, is 'exercise for your face'. Electrodes are attached to key spots on the face contracting the muscles causing them to tone and lift. Feeling like a Star Trek extra, she hooked me up and turned me on. Every ten seconds or so, the electrodes sent a shock through my face causing it to spasm. She explained the

concept as more slendertone than torture but my cheekbones weren't sure. Invented for use on stroke victims, I began to wonder what came first. The sensation is somewhere between childbirth and a roller-coaster ride. I refused her kind offer to 'turn it up'. When the ten-minute treatment was over, it was hard to feel anything different bar a new nervous twitch, but a look in the mirror proved otherwise. My face looked radiant and pert even after one session - ten is recommended. Many do a course before a big event, or several courses a year to maintain the benefits. Feeling like I earned it, I settled into the more relaxing lift 6 treatment. Invented by the geniuses behind endermologie (the only proven cellulite-buster), the same principle of tissue restructuring applies. A teeny vacuum-like nozzle is rubbed around your face for thirty minutes causing increased blood flow and circulation, as well as high-tech exfoliation. Out go those nasty toxins and in comes a toner, firmer, brighter complexion. Not the traditional cleanse, massage, mask facials but you know what they say, 'no pain, no gain'!

Be warned, however, beauty comes from the inside. Ian Marber, aka The Food Doctor, explains: "The key to healthy skin is to eat plenty of whole fruits and vegetables for their fibre and antioxidants, not to mention the distilled water content. Combine this with essential fats from fish and olive oil to maximise the quality of the new cells. Frankly, without this, no amount of stimulation from the outside is going to do any more than jazz up second rate skin cells." (*continues p. 30*)



Facial at Michaeljohn

