

FAD BEAUTY TREATMENTS: IS THERE SCIENCE BEHIND THE HYPE?

Dermatologist evaluates five trendy beauty treatments

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OVERVIEW:

Popularized by celebrities and featured in news segments, unique – sometimes offbeat – beauty treatments promise the fountain of youth. While some initial research studies have shown these fad treatments to be effective, dermatologists remain cautious about recommending them over proven therapies, which have been more extensively studied and can provide longer-lasting results.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF DERMATOLOGY EXPERT:

Board-certified dermatologist Joshua Zeichner, MD, FAAD, assistant professor of dermatology, Mount Sinai Hospital, New York.

MICRONEEDLING

- A procedure during which tiny needles are used to poke holes in the skin, which can be followed by the application of a skin cream or serum. As the skin heals, collagen is stimulated, improving fine lines and the texture of the skin.^{1,2,3}
- This treatment has also been used to treat scars as it builds up collagen underneath sunken scars, such as acne scars.
- Depending on the depth of penetration of the needles, microneedling can require several days or weeks of recovery to allow for reduction of swelling, redness and potential scabbing.
- Side effects can include allergy to the cream or serum applied to the skin, infections from improperly cleaned equipment, bleeding, and pain. Dr. Zeichner does not recommend microneedling for patients with a history of keloids, which are dome-shaped raised scars, because the treatment could cause a scar that could be worse than the original skin problem.
- While microneedling can be beneficial for some patients, if you want more profound results, Dr. Zeichner recommends laser resurfacing, which uses high-energy laser light to improve fine lines and skin texture.

BEE VENOM FACIAL

- Honeybee venom has properties that stimulate the production of collagen within the skin.^{4,5}
- Dr. Zeichner said bee venom facials may be more effective than traditional facials since they have the potential to impact the skin's ability to make collagen as opposed to just hydrating the skin or removing dirt and oil.
- Patients who are allergic to bee stings, should avoid the bee venom facial.
- For a proven way to stimulate collagen, Dr. Zeichner recommends the use of an over-the-counter topical retinoid instead of a bee venom facial.

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VAMPIRE “FACE-LIFT”

- During this procedure, blood is drawn from the patient to obtain platelet-rich plasma, which is then injected back into the patient’s face.^{6,7,8,9,10,11}
- Platelet-rich plasma contains growth factors that have been purported to stimulate the growth of collagen and healthy skin cells.
- While the vampire “face-lift” is a safe procedure, pain and bruising can occur.
- If you are considering a vampire “face-lift,” Dr. Zeichner says be patient as the full-effect of this treatment takes weeks to months to see improvement and often multiple sessions are needed.
- For longer-lasting, immediate results, Dr. Zeichner recommends fillers because these are proven to plump up the skin.

BIRD POOP FACIAL

- Uses the droppings of Japanese nightingales that are fed a specialized diet. The droppings are sanitized under UV light and then mixed with rice bran for the purpose of exfoliating and brightening the skin.
- The droppings are rich in urea and the amino acid guanine. Urea is a known humectant commonly included in skin moisturizers.¹² Guanine is thought to be the ingredient that gives fish scales their shine.¹³
- There is a rare possibility of an allergic reaction to the nightingale droppings.
- Dr. Zeichner says exfoliating treatments, such as microdermabrasion or glycolic acid exfoliation, paired with traditional moisturizers are proven to be more effective than bird poop facials in brightening the skin.

PLACENTA FACIAL

- Uses a serum derived from sheep placenta that some believe can brighten and tighten the skin.
- The serum is rich in proteins and growth factors, which are ingredients shown to stimulate collagen and protect the skin from UV light and pollution.¹⁴
- If you are considering a placenta facial, Dr. Zeichner recommends using over-the-counter cosmeceuticals with ingredients such as antioxidants, like retinol and peptides, or alpha and beta hydroxy acids instead. These ingredients are proven to help brighten the skin and stimulate collagen.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF DERMATOLOGY EXPERT ADVICE:

“While exotic beauty treatments can offer some cosmetic benefits, further research needs to be done to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of these fad treatments,” said Dr. Zeichner. “Fortunately, there are skin care treatments – both over-the-counter and in the dermatologist’s office – that are backed by science and proven to be effective. Dermatologists are the experts in treating aging skin. They have conducted years of research to identify the most proven treatments. Before undergoing a unique beauty treatment, make an appointment with your board-certified dermatologist to discuss the best options for your skin.”

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Jennifer Allyn
(847) 240-1730
jallyn@aad.org

Nicole DiVito
(847) 240-1746
ndivito@aad.org

Kara Jilek
(847) 240-1701
kjilek@aad.org

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