

# Ouch! I've had a facelift with 69,000 needles

...but this £2,000 scalpel-free treatment really did rejuvenate my 50-year-old skin

I've noticed people peering at me oddly. But I haven't taken offence. Because the stares have been followed up with the most compliments I have ever had about my skin in my entire life. And that's not something you expect when you are a year shy of 50. The reason? For the past four months, I have regularly been subjected to a staggering 69,000 injections in my face, as one of the first people in the country to trial the latest, non-surgical facelift on the market.

## A THREE-IN-ONE BUZZ

While celebrities such as Jennifer Aniston and Kim Kardashian rave about collagen-boosting Fraxel laser treatments, the cosmetic world has moved on, and the buzz now is about Intracel. This is a skin-tightening and rejuvenating system combining three of the most promising minimally invasive techniques: micro-needling, radiofrequency (a type of heat) skin tightening and lasers.

## HOW IT WORKS

Unlike lasers that burn the surface of the skin, Intracel injects radiofrequency heat energy into the deepest layers of the skin via needles as fine as a human hair. It works by creating thousands of microscopic wounds which stimulate tired old skin cells to go into overdrive, producing new, fresh, young collagen.

The makers of Intracel claim this will lead to tighter, firmer, brighter skin, with smaller pores. It is even said to lift sagging jawlines, soften crow's feet, fill out acne scars, remove red veins and cure acne, because it kills the bacteria that cause spots and reduces the activity of oil glands in the skin.

But don't think this treatment is

By **Leah Hardy**

like a pampering facial. Remember those 69,000 needle pricks?

## BRING ON THE NEEDLES

Before treatment, I was slathered in a powerful anaesthetic cream. At one point, I nervously licked my lips, and ended up with a numb tongue as well as face. Then it was time to face the Needles of Doom. Dr Blakely showed me the device and I could see that when a button was pressed, dozens of teeny needles would shoot out. And with that I lay on the couch.

Dr Blakely started on my forehead. She switched to deeper needles on my cheek where there is more fat, and shallow ones over the nose where there isn't. The overall sensation is of warmth, but when the needles hit bony areas, there is a sharp, brief pain.

## NO PAIN, NO GAIN

The needling took less than half an hour, and then I relaxed with a cooling mask for 15 minutes. But afterwards my face was scarlet and there were tiny droplets of bright red blood under the skin on my nose. I'm not allowed to wear make-up, so I put on big sunglasses and stop for a coffee, but nobody comments.

As the redness fades, I develop stripes of tiny scabs on my cheeks and grid marks of more scabs on my forehead. I look as if I've been savaged by a cat. My husband is visibly shocked: 'What on earth have you done to yourself?' he says. No pain, no gain, I say.



DALE CHERRY



## IT GETS WORSE

The next day, I have teeny bruises under my eyes, and the stripes on my cheeks are still vivid. My husband anxiously asks: 'Will you get better?' And something else happens. I erupt into horrible spots.

Dr Blakely warned that a brief attack of acne may be a side effect, but there are also tiny red drops of blood in every pore on my nose and three big scratches on my cheek.

## THEN THINGS IMPROVE

On day five, I use a chemical peel Dr Blakely gave me in an aftercare pack. The next day my skin looks smoother but the red blood spots in my pores and the scratches are still there. However, I start to notice the skin around my eyes looks fresher. It takes two weeks for my skin woes to completely disappear.

## ROUND TWO

When, six weeks later, I arrive for treatment number two – for best

results they recommend this – I am nervous. Dr Blakely says my reaction was extreme and very unusual. And this time things are very different. The redness fades completely in a few hours and my skin looks just a little pink, with no scabs. My skin looks brighter and clearer and my jawline tighter already.

## THIRD TIME LUCKY

I return for my third treatment, almost four months after the first, and it's a breeze. Yes, the needles are a bit ouchy at times, but even though she uses a high level of energy, all I have to show for it is some transient redness, a few minute blood speckles, and a tiny sprinkling of almost invisible scabs on one cheek and above one eye, which disappear in a few days.

I can see subtle changes. My brows are more arched, my cheeks look fuller and my jawline tighter, as if everything's slightly lifted. My nose to mouth lines are softer and, on the right hand side of my face, have



**GLOWING:** Leah's skin after the facelift and, below, before. **Below left:** Having the treatment and, inset, the needle device

## X-rays offer hope for diseased eyes

A revolutionary new treatment for wet age-related macular degeneration (wet AMD) has had its global launch in the UK, writes Rachel Reilly.

Wet AMD is a disease that causes blindness in the centre of the eye and affects 420,000 Britons.

The condition develops when abnormal blood vessels cluster under the macula – the part of the eye responsible for detailed central vision – and leak, so obscuring vision.

Wet AMD is the most serious form of AMD because without treatment sight can deteriorate within days.

Standard treatment involves an injection of anti-vascular endothelial growth factor (anti-VEGF) into the eye, which prevents further blood vessels developing.

The procedure needs to be carried out between every one and three months and only prevents vision from worsening. The non-invasive

Oraya therapy is a one-time treatment and can improve the vision of a diseased eye.

It involves a low-dose but precisely focused X-ray beam on the macula to inhibit the growth of blood vessels.

The ray also has the benefit of reducing inflammation and scarring. Each session takes 20 minutes.

'Each time the vessels leak, it triggers inflammation, which leads to scarring of the macula,' says Mr Andrew

Luff, consultant ophthalmic surgeon at the Optegra Specialist Eye Hospital group, which offers the treatment.

'This is a giant leap forward for those suffering with Wet AMD,' says Luff.

'Oraya will dramatically improve the quality of life for the patients.'

Although not available on the NHS, private treatment is available from £5,145.

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