



Can a massage help melt away my wrinkles?

A new breed of facial claims to do more than make your skin glow - it promises lasting anti-ageing results and even the ability to detect health issues. We put it to the test...

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Frances rejuvenated and less stressed after facial reflexology

LYING on a couch in Nikke Ariff's pristine white consulting room, I'm fighting the urge to drift off.

Conking out isn't what I'm here for. No, I'm here to do battle with my wrinkles.

However, as Nikke, a facial reflexologist, gently massages my forehead, jawline and cheeks, I feel the tensions of the day slip away.

Suddenly the overdue electricity bill seems of no consequence. I stop worrying about the fact that I haven't done the online shop or unloaded the dishwasher.

In fact, I stop worrying point blank and drift into a sort of dreamlike state from which I am awakened some time later by a snore (me, not Nikke obviously).

Fifty minutes and two short dozes later Nikke tells me I'm done.

I feel incredibly relaxed and rejuvenated but I'm not here simply to unwind.



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Instead I have been promised a more youthful complexion. So has it worked? It's no secret that I'm sick of my tired, washed-out face.

I want to look vivacious and glamorous but I don't.

Instead, to put it bluntly, I look worn out. My complexion is a sort of sludgy colour.

The lines running from my nose to my mouth seem to deepen on a daily basis and my forehead looks as though a fork has been dragged across it.

Yet resorting to fillers, Botox or surgery doesn't appeal.

I'm only 44 and surely only older people have facelifts or plump out their meagre lips with chemicals?

It seems I'm not alone in seeking alternatives to the surgeon's knife.

"There has been a backlash against cosmetic surgery," says London-based Nikke, who has been practising facial reflexology for 15 years.

"Women are frightened of injecting poison into their faces and even chemical peels are getting a bad press because of fears about sun damage on vulnerable skin."

Worries about possible long-term damage and the expense of cosmetic surgery have meant that middle-aged women such as myself are increasingly looking for alternative, more natural, anti-ageing beauty treatments.

Reflexology is an ancient system of body manipulation that originated more than 1,000 years ago in India.

The basic philosophy teaches that points on the surface of the body equate to organs within the body.

If certain pressure points on the body are manipulated then the organs which match those points inside the body will be relieved of stress or pain. For example, the heel of the foot relates to the lower back.

Massaging the heel will, the theory goes, relieve lower back pain. Most practitioners concentrate on the feet or hands.

Facial reflexology is rare, although a small South American tribe, the Mapuche, has been practising it for centuries.

According to this tribe, the centre of the forehead equates to the small intestine, the area around the chin influences hormones and the bridge of the nose corresponds to the spine.

Nikke says: "Manipulating areas of the face - and I work on 35 main areas - gives me an indication of where clients might have health issues. Any thickened skin, tiny swellings or lumps would indicate a problem in that area."

As with most alternative therapies, however, there is scant scientific evidence to back up practitioners' claims of health benefits.

However, I'm not here for my health. I just want to look better.

"Internal stresses and strains show on the face," says Nikke, adding that facial reflexology can help to eliminate fine lines, wrinkles and general facial wear and tear.

"It's a sort of non-invasive mini-facelift."

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Nikke Ariff



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Nikke explains that by rubbing and manipulating the face, blood supply is increased, improving both the complexion and circulation.

Pressure points are activated, encouraging the release of endorphins, the feelgood hormone which helps to relax tension in the face.

Nikke also draws on the Chinese tradition of acupuncture, focusing on specific areas of the face which she says correspond to energy channels in the body.

She says: "Pressing on acupuncture points frees up energy channels so that endorphins can travel more easily around the body."

Reflexology is probably a good idea for the needle-phobic because acupuncturists use tiny fine needles inserted into specific parts of the body and face.

Looking in the mirror after the session I'm pleasantly surprised to see my own reflection appearing softer and altogether less stressed.

I can't say I look 10 years younger because I don't but I do look invigorated.

My face has a pleasant, rosy glow. My eyes look brighter and my skin, which Nikke has massaged with rosehip oil, looks smoother.

In short, I'm jolly pleased with the results. Facial reflexology feels like a high-end facial involving lots of massage, manipulation and lovely scented oils.

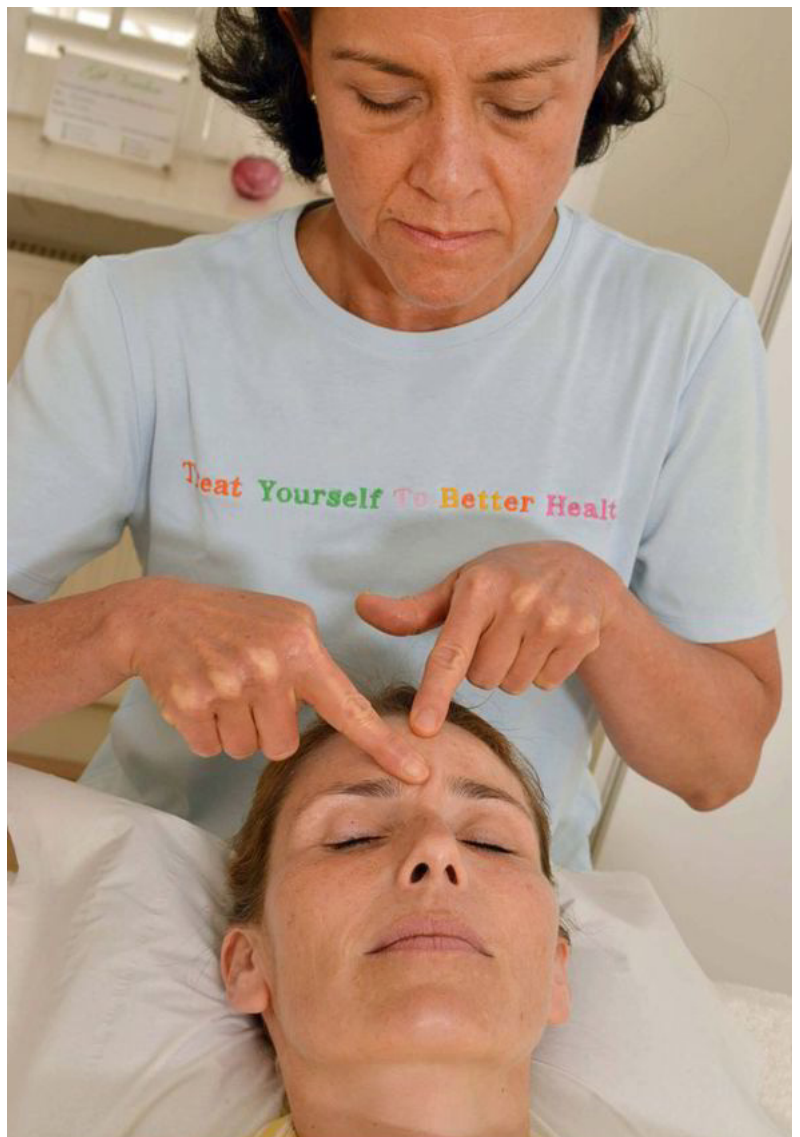
Nikke uses rosehip because it is full of vitamins A and C which have a rejuvenating effect on the skin.

Although I only had one treatment and Nikke recommends six for maximum results, I could see a definite difference.

My skin looked brighter, smoother and perhaps as a result of the oils, softer.

At £75 per session it isn't cheap but then neither is Botox and frankly I prefer rosehip on my face to Botulinum toxin in it.

To book a session with Nikke Ariff go to www.mindbodypositive.com or call 020 7388 9818.



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