

Candis



BEGINNERS' GUIDE TO... MESOTHERAPY

It's the chic Frenchwoman's secret weapon – offering brighter, tighter, firmer skin without surgery, fillers or Botox. This treatment is super discreet, keeps wrinkles at bay, and can even tackle a double chin. But it comes at a price that makes the most expensive skin creams seem like a bargain. So how good is mesotherapy, and is it worth it? LEAH HARDY investigates

WHAT IS MESOTHERAPY?

Cosmetic doctor Dr Sarah Shah says, "Mesotherapy is the use of small superficial injections to the skin's middle layer – the 'mesoderm' – that administer a tailor-made cocktail to rejuvenate your complexion. We inject small amounts of vitamins, PRP – platelet-rich plasma from your own blood which contains cell-stimulating growth factors – and amino acids via a special mesotherapy gun. This increases collagen and elastin production, giving you a more youthful glow, reducing fine lines and wrinkles and making skin firmer and tighter." It was invented in France, and Cindy Crawford and Madonna are rumoured to be fans.

IS IT FOR USE ONLY ON THE FACE?

No, even fat deposits in cellulite and areas such as the chin and

jowls can be successfully treated with mesotherapy.

Dr Mervyn Patterson, the co-founder of Woodford Medical clinics, says, "Enzymes in the serum disrupt the wall of the fat cell, releasing the fat, allowing it to be reabsorbed by the lymphatic system and excreted by the body."

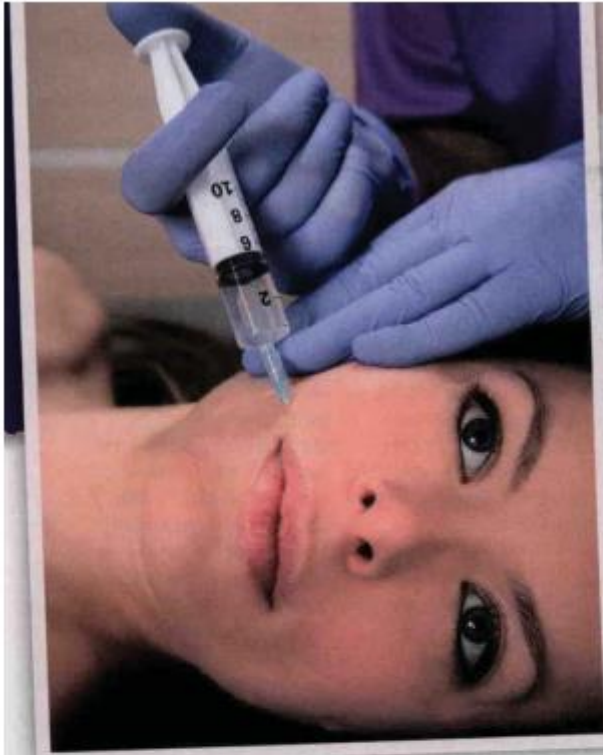
Recently, mesotherapy has been used to treat hair loss. Hair-friendly nutrients are injected into the scalp to encourage stronger-growing, thicker hair.

IS IT ALWAYS DONE USING NEEDLES?

Some types of mesotherapy are described as 'no-needle meso'. Instead of needles, electric currents or jets of oxygen are used to push the serums into the skin. However, says Dr Patterson, "Attractive as this might seem, the problem is that

the penetration of the active ingredient will be very limited."

The idea of injections may sound terrifying, but the needles are hair-fine and they penetrate only around 3mm-6mm into the skin. Typically, the treatment is administered by a special mesotherapy 'gun' which, rather noisily, but fairly painlessly, rattles off multiple punctures. Other doctors employ microneedling devices such as rollers or pen-like automatic devices which shoot several needles into the skin at once. Dr Patterson offers DermaFrac treatments, in which a device needles the skin and pushes in serums at the same time. The injector gun sucks up the skin as it inserts the needles. This has two benefits, says Dr Patterson, "Firstly it means the depth of penetration is equal over the whole face, and secondly the suction



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ingredients that help reduce unwanted pigmentation and this can be an effective treatment for certain forms of sunspots and melasma."

Often, mesotherapy serums contain hyaluronic acid, the natural substance that makes skin look and feel hydrated and plump. As well as on the face, microinjections of hyaluronic acid can be used to plump the hands, neck and chest area for more youthful-looking skin.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

Anything from 20 to 40 minutes, depending on the size of the area injected.

HOW SOON CAN YOU SEE RESULTS?

You'll usually see subtly brighter, fresher skin within a day or so of treatment. If your mesotherapy cocktail contained hyaluronic acid, your skin will look visibly smoother and dewier, and feel freshly moisturised. Mesotherapy leaves you looking completely natural as it can't freeze your face or leave you looking unnaturally plumped.

HOW LONG DO RESULTS LAST?

Maintenance is everything. "It's not a one-treatment wonder," >

distracts nerve endings, which makes the treatment a lot more comfortable than normal needling."

WHAT HAPPENS IN A TREATMENT?

You lie on a couch while your skin is cleansed. You may be given a light peel to prepare the skin or you may have a topical numbing cream applied to your face for half an hour before treatment begins. It's not exactly a pampering treat, but it's not nearly as uncomfortable

as it perhaps looks, and most people don't find it painful.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Dr Patterson says, "Mesotherapy solutions can stimulate skin cells to produce more collagen. The skin-friendly ingredients injected might include growth factors, peptides, antioxidants and trace elements that provide the ideal environment for a healthy skin that copes with ageing better. Some mesotherapy 'cocktails' are formulated with

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says Dr Patterson. While one treatment could give you a brighter look for a special event, if you want results to last longer than a facial, you need to be considering a course of treatments. He says, "Typical initial courses are weekly for the first month, fortnightly for the second month, then monthly. Maintenance treatments are either once a month or four times a year."

Dr Shah suggests a less onerous schedule of three treatments, four weeks apart, followed by maintenance at three- or six-monthly intervals. Initially, at least three treatments are recommended at four-weekly intervals and maintenance thereafter at three- to six-monthly intervals, depending on desired outcome."

In some cases of hair loss, such as post-pregnancy, a single short course may be enough to kick-start regrowth.

"Fat-dissolving treatment tends to last for several years," explains Dr Patterson. "I have many clients who have seen significant and long-lasting results in the under-chin and jowl area."

WHO IS SUITABLE FOR TREATMENT?

"It's suitable for all skin types from mid-thirties with no



person is prone to under-eye swelling.

WHAT'S THE DOWNTIME?

Dr Patterson says, "One of the reasons why mesotherapy is so popular is that downtime is generally minimal." You'll look red and freckly with puncture marks afterwards, but this should subside within a day or two. Treatments to remove fat can cause swelling. He adds, "If you can't take a few days off, I recommend having treatment on a Friday so you can return to work the following Monday."

Scalp treatments usually don't have any downtime.

COST

Single treatments cost from £150 to £400. Dr Patterson says a course of seven treatments over three months at his clinic will cost around £1,400.

upper age limit," Dr Patterson says. It's off-limits for pregnant and breastfeeding women, though it is very unlikely to do any harm. If you have any allergies, it's essential you know exactly what's in the product being used. Avoid doctors who claim their formulations are secret.

ANY SIDE EFFECTS?

Side effects are usually very limited and can be easily disguised with mineral make-up. Tiny purple dots will appear at some of the injection sites but they will disappear quickly. Larger bruises can occur but are uncommon. Mild swelling under the eye is not uncommon, particularly if the

WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

If you are looking for brighter, dewier skin, there are a host of options, from microneedling to peels, laser and intense pulsed light. The least expensive approach is to use effective skincare. An appointment with a cosmetic dermatologist costs from £150 to £300 but can save money in the long run, by steering you away from expensive creams and towards ones that really work. Even high-factor sunscreen, used religiously all year round, has been proven to reverse skin ageing.