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High-tech facials - the benefits for you

All About You online 04.08.2009

High powered facials are about more than a cleanse and polish. Bernadette Fallon investigates



These days facials are becoming more and more high tech but I think I've finally discovered one of the most 'techie' facials around. The Cherry Woods Full Bloom facial weighs in at an impressive two-hours, costs 130 and combines cutting-edge technology, advanced skincare treatments and holistic techniques - taking facials to a new level. Based in Richmond in Surrey, Cherry's clients include Julie Etchingam, ITV1 news presenter, TV couple Gabby and Kenny Logan, and Lisa Burke, Sky News weathergirl.

The basic facial offers Environ Active Vitamin Therapy and Eminence skincare (more on which later) and includes a face steam, hot towels, exfoliating peel, pore extraction, lymph-drainage massage and holistic therapies. An upgrade to the 'Full Bloom' adds Omnilux Revive™ photo rejuvenation treatment, a CACI (Computer Aided Cosmetology Instrument) treatment and extended holistic treatment time. And yes - this needs some explanation!

First: the science

Omnilux Revive™ photo rejuvenation treatment sounds scarily high tech. In practice, it's just like a lovely lie on a beach in glorious sunshine - without any risk of sun damage. This treatment is a natural method of skin rejuvenation using light-only methods, using the same processes the body uses to counter the effects of ageing.

I lie back, close my eyes and let the powerful red light do its work. As the light drenches my skin and glows orange behind my eyelids, I imagine I've turned my face to the sun and it feels good. And, just like the effects of natural light, it stimulates Serotonin production (making it ideal also for SAD sufferers), hence it's also known as the 'feel good facial'. Because it penetrates deep into the skin (63mm), it stimulates

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collagen activity and extends the effects of skincare products - making it the perfect way to prepare the skin for the high activity skincare ingredients it's about to receive.

Next, it's time for my CACI. This Computer Aided Cosmetology Instrument (yes, you can see why they shortened the name) works by combining a unique patented waveform with the naturally-occurring bio-electric current of the body to achieve quick results on sagging muscles and skin tissue. In practice, a pad is applied to my face and I feel a very faint electrical buzz on my skin as the procedure is performed. It is pleasant and I like the feeling that something is happening, that my skin is being stimulated.

Not yet a decade old, CACI was pioneered by one of the leading practitioners of micro current therapy Dr Thomas Wing, and Cherry is a former national trainer for CACI International, so is well versed in this treatment.

Second: the skincare

Throughout the facial my skin is treated with Environ Active Vitamins and Eminence organic skincare. Eminence is a high end product range, counting Madonna and Liz Hurley among its fans, and used in some of the most exclusive international spas. Organic and high performance, the products are based on fruits, herbs and spices grown in Hungary.

Environ skincare has been developed by internationally recognised South African plastic surgeon Dr Des Fernandez and is based on scientifically-proven active ingredients - Vitamin A, anti-oxidants vitamins C and E, beta-carotene, colostrums and lactic acid - all used in higher concentrations than in normal skincare ranges. Benefits of this particular cocktail include reducing visible effects of ageing by boosting smooth, even-toned skin, and improving pigmentation.

I also have an Environ 'mini' peel, comprised of 10% lactic acid to really slough away dead skin cells that can make skin look dull and flat. I experience a very faint tingling during the exfoliation process. Cherry is keen to ensure that this should not be uncomfortable - however as I've already experienced a 50%-strength peel, I'm well able for it!

Finally: holistic healing

Despite all the high tech machinery and impressive scientific claims, my favourite part of the whole experience is the reflexology and head and neck massage. I've never had reflexology before, but on this evidence I would be persuaded to try a full treatment. The holistic treatments are the perfect way to maximise the high acting ingredients and high tech techniques, and my relaxed glow is commented on after the treatment.

On the evidence of how my skin looks afterwards I would certainly be tempted to return for additional treatments. And yes the full blown facial is expensive but Cherry offers a whole menu of choices, starting from the basic facial at £64, to which assorted one-off treatments can be added.

Alternatively you can opt for Omnilux Revive™ photo rejuvenation (£65), CACI lift (from £30) or mini peel (£38) as individual stand-alone treatments.

More information

Cherry started her beauty therapy career in The Sanctuary Spa in Covent Garden, has been a TV makeup artist for Sky News, and has worked in skincare and massage in the US where she also gained several post-graduate qualifications from the International Dermal Institute. She has worked as a trainer for professional skincare companies including Environ and CACI, so has in-depth knowledge of the skincare treatments and procedures she advocates in her own business.

Her practice is based at The Smile Studios Dental Spa, 5 Hill St, Richmond, London TW9 1SX; phone 07792 713476 or 020 8332 6833;

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