

Can you rejuvenate your neck?

BONNIE ESTRIDGE, Daily Mail - 28th July 2003

It's the real giveaway of a woman's age. The deep lines and sagging skin that develop on the neck are difficult to conceal.

Surgically, it is impossible to 'lift' the neck without a facelift, which costs up to £8,000 and can be extremely painful.

However, Botox has recently been applied to the neck area, and there are now a handful of other instant rejuvenating treatments. But do they work?

Botox

Sharon Jackson, 49, who works in telesales, lives with her husband John, 52, who owns a building company, and their son Ben, 22, in Canvey Island, Essex. Sharon says:

The problem: The rings round my neck were looking as deep as those around a tree. And, to my horror, I noticed that when I got annoyed, the vertical muscles on either side of my throat looked like long pieces of string.

The treatment: Botox is a highly purified and diluted form of the muscle-paralysing botulism bacteria.

When injected into the tight platysma muscles - the vertical strip of muscles that stands out from your neck when you grimace - it releases the tension caused by talking, eating and smiling, and stops the neck looking scraggy, both vertically and along the horizontal 'bracelet' lines.

The treatment: Dr Patrick Bowler at the Courthouse Clinic in Harley Street used a syringe with a very fine needle and injected the muscles on either side of the throat eight times.

Surprisingly, it was virtually painless and took only ten minutes. Afterwards my neck also felt rather numb the following day.

The result: Nothing happened straight away, but after eight days the horizontal lines on my neck seemed to have smoothed out. The effect can last from three to six months, depending on your metabolism.

Val Jefferys, 49, senior partner in a business consultancy, lives with her husband and colleague Colin, 57, and their sons Neil, 19, and Max, 18, in Sandy, Bedfordshire. Val says:

Problem: My neck has developed deep lines and is beginning to sag. I've started to wear scarves and polo necks to cover it up.

Treatment: The Sorisa lifting machine uses electrical impulses to tone the muscles of the neck and iron out wrinkles or 'bracelet' lines. Ten one-hour weekly treatments are recommended.

What was it like?: First my neck was cleansed, exfoliated and moisturised. The Sorisa machine was switched on and two rods with rollers at the end were applied to the neck area. These carry a low-voltage current to the muscles and are swept up the neck and throat.

The results: I could feel the difference immediately, and when I looked in the mirror I was stunned because the lines on my neck had gone. I felt ten years younger.

After three days the skin still felt smooth and soft and my jawline looked a lot sharper, but the effect gradually wears off.

Ann Cunnane, 38, managing director of a business consultancy, lives with her husband Paul, 36, a mechanical engineer, and their five-year-old son Christopher in Borehamwood, Hertfordshire. Ann says:

The problem: Over the past few years, I've noticed that my neck has started to look dry and saggy. I think this is because of sun damage and the fact that I never moisturise below the jawline.

The treatment: Gerard's Rigenera Face and Neck Workout is a deep manual 'lifting' massage that uses oils to help lymphatic drainage and stimulate the neck muscles. Six hour-long weekly treatments are recommended for the full lifting effect.

What was it like?: This was an amazing massage and the therapist gave my face and neck a good workout. Then the therapist 'lifted' the chin and neck using short, deep movements which I found quite uncomfortable. I was left for 20 minutes after a range of essential oils, a cooling face mask and layer of tin foil had been applied to my face and neck. After this was removed, the oils were massaged in for the last time.

The results: My face and neck looked toned, my skin felt more hydrated and smooth, and my skin tone had been evened out, though a lot of this might be because my neck had been moisturised.

Alison McGrath, 42, owns two gastro-pubs with her partner Lakis Hondrogiannais, 37. They live with their children Gabriella, ten, and Alexander, six, in Marylebone, Central London. Alison says:

The problem: I have a double chin and the skin on my neck looks wrinkly, dry and generally uncared for.

The treatment: Madonna is a die-hard fan of Crystal Clear Oxygen treatments, which combine micro-dermabrasion, oxygen therapy and a 'lifting' mask to rejuvenate the skin.

By removing the top layer of dull, uneven skin and infusing oxygen to deliver restructuring serum into the deeper layers, the skin looks more youthful and 'alive'.

What was it like?: The therapist used a hand-held device which sprayed micro-crystals on to the skin to sand it down, removing the dull, dead top layer. The same machine then sucked them off again. This 'dermabrasion' was ticklish, but pleasantly so.

After around 20 minutes, a cold 'repair' serum, containing antioxidants, shea butter and silk proteins to calm the skin, was applied. She then used a small pump to deliver pressurised oxygen to the neck to push in the serum.

Finally, an algae gel 'mini lift mask' on a gauze base was applied to moisturise and draw out impurities.

The result: My neck looked completely rejuvenated. The blotchy, uneven skin tone had disappeared and it looked brighter and felt almost silky smooth.