

# Nourished

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# Journal

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Beauty

## Pins & Needles

We've heard of acupuncture as a means for pain relief, but how about as a cosmetic aid? Using the principles of acupuncture, specialists are now espousing its virtue in diminishing wrinkles, acne and a plethora of other skin complaints. In fact, it's fast becoming an alternative to more invasive and less holistic procedures like Botox, harsh chemical peels and fillers. It's impossible to understand cosmetic, or facial, acupuncture without understanding acupuncture as a whole. Essentially, acupuncture is based on the principle of Qi, or energy, and the clear flow of this energy through the invisible meridians that charter our bodies. If this energy gets blocked, various issues—including digestive, emotional, gynecological, neurological, muscular, vascular, as well as more general issues like chronic fatigue syndrome, muscle injuries and stress—are believed to follow, as the energy is not able to surge through and feed the body.

In a nutshell, the body is imbalanced and not functioning as the well-oiled machine it actually is (or should be). And this is where the 350 acupuncture points and those fine needles kick in. When placed strategically around the body, acupuncture can help release this blocked or stagnant Qi and ensure the smooth flow of energy back through your meridians.

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Words:  
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### Putting Your Best Face On

Acupuncture may only be a relatively new thing in the Western world, but the tradition of acupuncture has been around for an indeterminately long time. In fact, although it originated in China thousands of years ago, no one has yet been able to put an exact date on it. Let's just say it goes way back. And now the advent of cosmetic acupuncture is taking on a life of its own, with celebrities like Gwyneth Paltrow jumping on the bandwagon.

According to Vivian Tam, founder of Cosmetic Acupuncture Melbourne, the newfound success of cosmetic acupuncture, or Constitutional Facial Rejuvenation as her training referred to it, lies in its holistic outlook: "I think for the most part, people are becoming more aware of natural and safe alternatives to conventional medicine and surgical/cosmetic procedures. People are more educated about clean diets and superfoods, natural healing practices and alternative forms of treatments for day-to-day ailments. It also helps that my patients are always so thrilled with their results and cosmetic acupuncture, so word spreads quickly!"

According to Vivian, the benefits of cosmetic acupuncture include enhanced moisture to the skin by increasing the circulation of blood; an improvement in the skin's muscle tone, firmness and elasticity; a decrease in fine lines and wrinkles; a glowing visage; brighter eyes; and an increased production of collagen. And that's just to name a few—acne sufferers and those with facial scarring and pigmentation have also found success with cosmetic acupuncture.

In addition to the above list of pros, as opposed to Botox and other cosmetic and surgical solutions to skin complaints, cosmetic acupuncture not only helps your skin heal, but is also good for you to boot!

### It's All in the Technique

Another benefit of cosmetic acupuncture is that it's not a localized procedure that purely focuses on your facade. Like acupuncture as a whole, cosmetic acupuncture seeks to unblock your Qi to restore health and wellbeing, so the process involves an assessment of your whole body. Vivian explains, "During a treatment, a thorough assessment of your body and its constitution will be performed, which generally includes a consultation,

pulse taking and tongue diagnosis. Every person will receive a different body acupuncture treatment depending on what the assessment shows. The acupuncture in the body may involve moving stagnant or blocked Qi, which can be caused by stress, or boosting the Qi and digestion in those that are deficient, tired and run down. I am a big believer that you cannot look your best if you do not feel your best."

The procedure itself usually involves a facial massage or gua sha (a traditional scraping massage), facial needling, acupuncture throughout the rest of the body and Chinese herbal mask. Naturally, the facial needling is where the focus of the treatment lies, but the treatment itself varies from patient to patient.

For those concerned with fine lines and wrinkles, Vivian's procedure will involve the insertion of facial needles at carefully selected areas of the face and body: "The skin sees it as a foreign object in the face causing a 'microtrauma' and this initiates a complex cascade of growth factors that result in collagen production and elastin fibers as the skin is going into 'repair mode' to try to fix the 'trauma.'"

### Time to Shine

If you're a wee bit impatient to get gleaming skin, it should be noted cosmetic acupuncture works in increments. Sure, you'll walk away from your first session with a glowing complexion, but for consistent and lasting results you're going to have to commit yourself. As Vivian cautions, "Results are going to vary from person to person. In saying that, from the experience with patients in the clinic, results are visible within three to six weeks. Firmness around the mouth is palpable and lines are beginning to soften. The most common feedback we get is that even after the first treatment, patients find their skin has become softer and easier to manage. Their skin is not as dry and there is better hydration. This is due to the instant blood flow that arrives to the face and skin during the facial acupuncture."

Vivian also notes that it helps if you have a strong foundation to work from—the healthier you are, the better your results will be. So stop reaching for those harsh peels and chemicals that treat the symptoms rather than the cause and get thee to a cosmetic acupuncturist! Being a human pin cushion has never felt (or looked) so good. **N**

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