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# SMOOTH OPERATORS

## MORE SA WOMEN FACE UP TO NON-SURGICAL SOLUTIONS

*These days you can get a 'facelift' during your lunch break and show off the results that afternoon.* ***Helen Grange*** *looks at facial procedures that don't leave you red-faced and hiding at home*

Women in their late 30s and over – with a bit of cash to spare – are raving about "lunchtime procedures".

Forget potions and lotions that promise miracles and seldom deliver – it's for Botox and dermal filler injections that these women are flocking to clinics and spas. And in many cases they are back at work in less than an hour.

"Women these days want minimal downtime for cosmetic procedures," says Dr Anushka Reddy, an aesthetics physician at Medi-Sculpt Clinic in Ruimsig, west of Joburg.

The clinic offers non-surgical solutions for a range of skin problems from wrinkles, pigmentation marks and lip-lines to scars, age spots and spider veins.

"Also, there is an increasing interest in non-invasive yet effective interventions. Botox, peels and fillers are enormously popular, despite the fact that South African women tend to be discreet about letting other people in on what they've done," she says.

Reddy must be right – similar establishments have proliferated across the country. But do these modern age-reversal solutions really work? After all, creams, however pricey and enticingly advertised, never really do the trick.

Women who have undergone non-surgical procedures are convinced that there is a discernable difference.

Among them is Isabelle (56), who found that even when she was in a good mood, people would come up to her and ask her why she was so angry.

"That was depressing, so I decided to get Botox done on my forehead. What a difference it made!" she says.

But, she warns, "it must be the correct kind of Botox, from America. The cheaper versions are just not effective".

Isabelle also got a "tiny bit of filler" along the ridge of her lower lip where lipstick would bleed into the wrinkles. "So now I don't look like Dracula after eating," she laughs.

She went to Dr Albert Niemann of Renew Time Restoration Clinic in Umhlanga in KwaZulu Natal, and believes it's imperative to go to an experienced medical practitioner, "not the lady who does facials for a living".

Chemical peels are acids that are applied to the skin in varying strengths to burn off the top layer/s to remove dead skin and promote the growth of new skin.

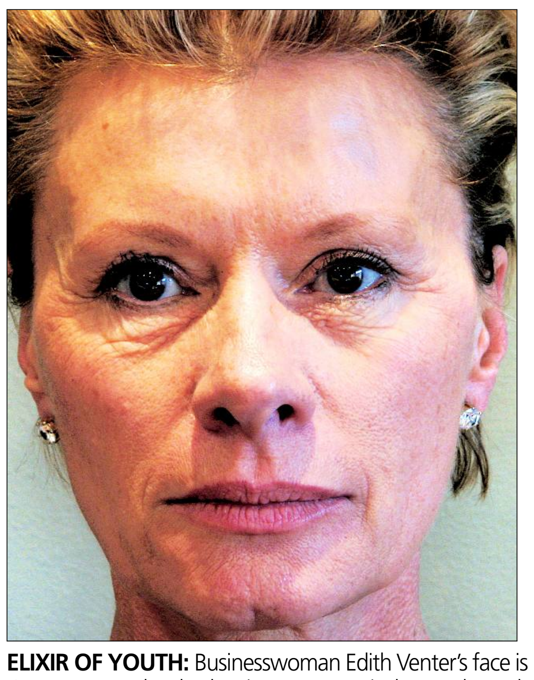
Superficial peels, with minimal downtime, use alpha hydroxy acids (AHA), which are organic fruit acids. The effect of these is almost an enhanced exfoliation.

Medium peels, in which trichloroacetic acids (TCA) or phenol are used, result in downtime of more than a week. They have a more dramatic effect on skin texture, and can reduce the appearance of deep wrinkles and remove pigmentation.

(Note that peels seen on TV programmes such as *10 Years Younger,* in which the skin turns almost black, sloughs off for two weeks and returns to normal after six weeks, are deep peels, where many layers of acid are administered by a surgeon.)

But even the superficial peels can make a distinct difference to skin that's looking tired, old or blemished. And when combined with the appropriate skin-care products, results can be most satisfying.

**GEM OF A JAB:** Aesthetics physician Dr Anushka Reddy injects a client with Botox and dermal fillers at her Medi-Sculpt Clinic. PICTURE: SIZWE NDINGANE



**ELIXIR OF YOUTH:** Businesswoman Edith Venter's face is rejuvenated after a (phenol) peel at The Melrose Aesthetic Centre. Venter has had various non-surgical procedures done, including Botox.

"You're peeling off the top layer of the epidermis, which starts looking dull as old cells build up," says Philippa Crichton of Tusc Clinic in Sandton. "They're a fantastic anti-ageing device, with minimum downtime, and we can go quite deep with these peels, through three layers of the epidermis."

Jenny Leach (47) is one of Crichton's converts. "It's the best thing I've ever done. I had fine dry lines and pigmentation from my pregnancies, and now my skin is like a baby's."

The normal procedure with chemical peels is to have three, at increasing strengths starting at 20%, every two or three weeks, then continue with a peel every four to six weeks. They take about as long as an ordinary facial.

Leach says a chemical peel "burns", with the level of discomfort depending on the strength of the peel, but it is "not unbearable". In her case, though her skin is not raging red afterwards, it flakes for about 10 days and she tends to stay indoors during that time.

"It's worth it, though. The difference is huge, and I don't get breakouts anymore," she says.

At the Melrose Aesthetic Centre at Melrose Arch, Dr Gordon Cohen takes care of the skins of celebrities such as e.tv presenter Debora Patta, who wrote on his website: "The peels reduced pigmentation, smoothed out the surface and literally made me feel as if my skin was getting younger."

The deeper the peel, the more skin will slough off, and this is the most uncomfortable part of the procedure, Cohen says.

Dramatically reducing downtime, however, is peeling with a Sciton Profile Laser, which Cohen says is one of the most advanced aesthetic lasers available in South Africa and results in great, peel-free skin within two days.

"The skin may be pink or red for a while, but afterwards there is a dramatic improvement in the texture. It can be used to remove pigment, lines and sun damage, and is especially effective in removing acne scarring.

"I have just used it on a client from France who is absolutely thrilled with the results," Cohen says. "Skin rejuvenation technology is advancing all the time."

Illona Deacon has had a laser peel and says the result is what she expected, "but much more profound is the realisation that the underlying tissue is more plump and youthful".

"I catch my husband looking at me, a confirmation that my assessments are not imaginary," she says.

At Reddy's clinic, facial contouring with Botox is fast gaining popularity. "Most people have Botox to iron out frown lines and fine lines around the eyes, but it can also be used on other areas of the face, jaw and neck to make the face look more contoured and youthful," she says.

Many of her older patients opt for Botox as well as a filler called Juvederm, which is new in South Africa and is mostly used to augment lips and smooth out lip lines and nasolabial folds, the creases around the mouth.

**YEARS OFF:** A woman's nasolabial folds are reduced after injection of the Juvederm filler.

(Dermal fillers can be collagen-based, but Juvederm is a gel made of hyaluronic acid, a naturally occurring substance in your skin that helps to add volume and hydration.)

Shirin Ismail (41) says the Botox and Juvederm together made a "massive" difference to her appearance.

"My frown and the deep lines around my mouth have been smoothed out and I look far more relaxed. People around me didn't really notice, but I certainly did," she says.

Each case is different, and should be assessed accordingly, says Reddy. "My philosophy, however, is to give a person a natural, relaxed look, not the tight, pulled look that a facelift can give you.

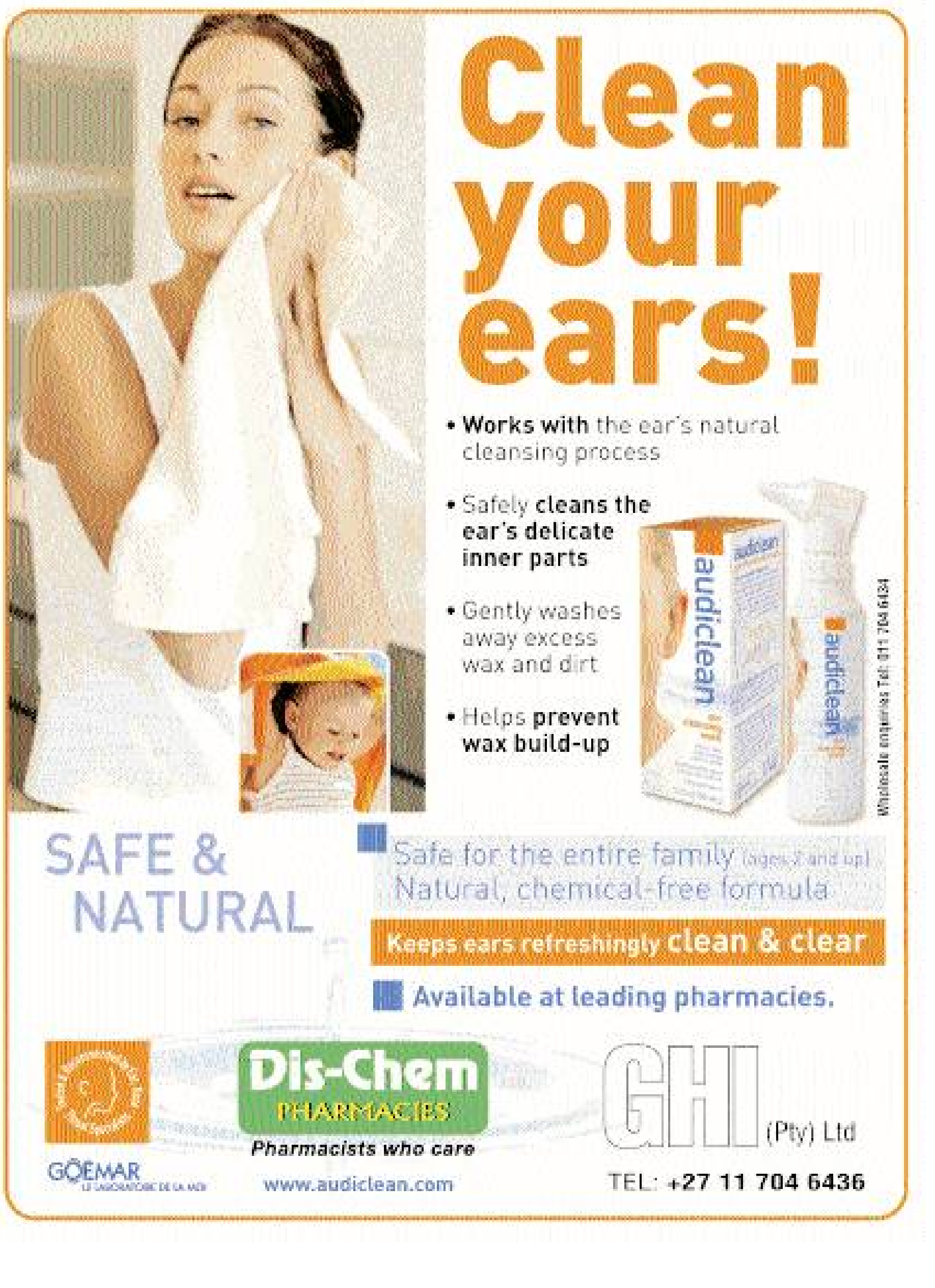
"It's not about changing your looks, it's about revitalising and enhancing them."

Horror stories abound about non-surgical procedures gone wrong, resulting in "trout pouts" and drooping eyelids. These procedures should be administered by a physician whom you have investigated. Either go with personal referrals or check their client testimonials.

### COSTS

Chemical peels – between R300 and R500.
Botox – R600 upwards, depending on how many injections you receive.
Fillers – R2 500 per syringe (one syringe can be used to treat both nasolabial folds).

### SOURCES

**Melrose Aesthetic Centre**: Tel 011-214-9940 or visit *www.themac.co.za*
**Medi-Sculpt Clinic:** Tel 011-958-2261 or visit *www.medisculptclinic.co.za*
**Tusc Clinic in Sandton:** Tel 011-884-6577 or visit *www.tusc.co.za*

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