

The 10-minute facelift: How celebrities have discovered the man with the golden gun

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The French know a lot about suffering for beauty - but I'm not sure les Parisiennes feel pain like the rest of us, if a new ten-minute facelift, now available in the UK, is anything to go by.

The facelift, created by French dermatologist Dr Maurice Dray, is a non-invasive answer to going under the knife. It uses injections of man-made chemicals called biphasic tricalcium phosphates (BTCPs) to restructure the jowls by encouraging the skin to produce collagen, the connective tissue that keeps our skin naturally taut when young.

BTCPs are commonly used in porcelain and dental powders, and medically as antacids or calcium supplements. For the facelift they come as micro-particles suspended in a hyaluronic acid gel.



Daunting: The gun that injects hyaluronic acid in pinpricks across the face

Hyaluronic acid, a substance found in the body that helps to hydrate the skin, is the principal ingredient in many facefillers - it plumps out deep grooves and wrinkles. And like BTCP, it biodegrades over time.

The two ingredients work by holding the face up while encouraging the body to produce natural facelifting collagen.

The hyaluronic acid takes effect immediately. But the real improvement - the new tissue, the increase in collagen fibres and the improvement in elasticity - appears within six weeks and peaks at around six months.

Dr Dray's celebrity-client list runs from First Ladies to rock wives, as well as the cream of the French A-list. He believes his ten-minute lift can even delay the age at which one might have to opt for more drastic, surgical measures.

'The effect is subtle,' he says. 'It won't prevent you needing a facelift for ever but can keep you looking younger for longer. It is suitable for men or women from about the age of 30.'



No pain, no gain: Victoria Lambert after her treatment and, right, before

He recommends a course of three treatments for maximum effect, six to eight months apart.

The benefits are clear: it's superquick, safe and a prophylactic against fortysomething jowls. At £450 a pop, it is also a fraction of the cost of a surgical facelift. But for the cons - well, there's only one way to find out.

My treatment begins with a blueberry scrub and chemical peel. This sloughs off dead skin cells. You could have the facelift without it, but it enhances the effect as the complexion is instantly brighter.

Then there's a round of something called mesotherapy, which aims to hydrate the skin and give it a vitamin boost.

A cocktail of elastin (a protein that makes up connective tissue), multivitamins and minerals and hyaluronic acid is injected in pin-pricks all over the face and neck with a scary-looking staple gun. It feels as if someone is pressing a ballpoint pen into the skin over and over again.

Dr Dray begins the facelift. First, a nurse covers the lower half of my face with anaesthetic cream. This takes five minutes to work.

Meanwhile, Dr Dray pops next door to see an Arab princess who has come in for some discreet adjustments to her visage.

The injections of BTCP, filler and vitamins are spaced in a line beginning under the chin and extending along the hairline to the outside of the eye. These are supplemented with more filler to plump out the wrinkles around the lips and along the 'marionette' lines between the nose and lips.



Victoria Lambert with French dermatologist Dr Maurice Dray, left

It is not a gentle therapy. I find it very painful around the mouth, despite the anaesthetic. This is exacerbated by the firm massage Dr Dray gives to the face to ensure the filler is smoothly distributed.

It was only ten minutes but felt at least twice that.

Afterwards, I have an ice pack to prevent bruising - unsuccessfully. I develop so many purple shiners along my jawline that I refuse to go out for two days.

But after five days the bruises are dull marks easily hidden, and by seven days I'm back to normal.

Except that I look better than that - I'm perky, fresh-faced, my jawline is tighter. The photographer thinks I look years younger. Two friends demand Dr Dray's number.

I have slipped through the net of time; I am no longer a harassed, overworked 44-year-old - I am a thirtysomething again!

As for the pain, the bruises - who cares? They're history. The future is Dr Dray ...