



The NO NIP *nip/tuck*

Less extreme than surgery, much cheaper and with noticeable results – Sharon Walker tests out the new facelift lite

THERE'S NOT MUCH I WON'T DO IN THE PURSUIT of beauty. Over the years, I've dabbled in everything from raw food diets and boot camps to acid peels and Botox. But I never thought I'd be the kind of woman to have a facelift. I'm hardly Cate Blanchett, but I can't complain. My skin has stood the test of time far better than I deserve, given my blistering experiments with BacoFoil and olive oil in the 1980s and, until recently, people have thought I'm a good few years younger.

But just as I am emerging from a 16-year marriage and need to look my best, my face, like the rest of my life, is collapsing. I've noticed a distinct downwards slide. More than once, I've caught myself Googling Demi Moore's plastic surgeon (disappointingly, she swears it's all natural), not to mention doing that thing where you push the skin up behind your ears to see what you'd look like if you *did* succumb to the scalpel.

I'm not alone. Figures published by the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS) show face and neck lifts were up nearly 5% last year, while a recent study by the Transform Cosmetic Surgery Group

revealed more than a quarter of all patients who visit plastic surgeons' offices in the UK are women who have just been through a divorce. Even so, a facelift is a drastic measure. There are risks – infection, bleeding, blood clots – not to mention extreme costs; around £6k. And you're not necessarily going to get six grand of good-looking. Think about the women you've seen who 'look like they've had a facelift' (or worse) and you'll appreciate that the results can be far from desirable.

But what if you could have a facelift lite? Some added tightness and brightness without the scalpel, stitches or worry of waking up with a Wildenstein? Now, that would be good. And so it is that I find myself in the airy Kensington clinic of dermatologist Dr Maurice Dray.

Despite having a name like an American rap star, Dr Dray hails from Paris, where he tends to the crème of the French celebristocracy. His speciality is mesotherapy (vitamin injections, basically), beloved by French women and British beauty editors for its glow-giving effects and minimal downtime. But Dr Dray has another trick up his sleeve for women like me. He has invented >>

the no-knife facelift, ideal for careworn faces that are starting to slide. Instead of a knife, this facelift lite uses needles, and instead of hoiking up the muscles and snipping off excess flesh, it uses hyaluronic acid and other chemicals to create a kind of scaffolding under the skin.

'I don't like to do too much,' Dr Dray explains of the process, which is an amalgamation of three mini lifts – the mesolift, the crown lift and the 10-minute lift (which tackles the lower face). 'You are a perfect candidate, as you're still young,' he tells me. 'We can use these little lifts to prevent.' I feel flattered that he's uttered the words 'young' and 'prevent' in my company, but I'm happy for him to staple my jowls under my chin, if that's what it takes.

Luckily, it turns out to be less extreme. The procedure starts with a dose of the doctor's signature mesotherapy – a cocktail of vitamins, co-enzymes, hyaluronic acid and amino acids injected in superficial pin-pricks. Surprisingly, it's not *too* painful. Think pins and needles. The idea behind mesotherapy is that you directly feed your epidermis with all the nutrients it needs, so it can perform at full pelt. Normally clients come for three or four sessions, but my skin instantly looks more dewy.

Next comes the crown lift, which involves injecting filler along my hairline and above my brows. 'The filler fixes the forehead up, so we have a result that opens the eyes and lightens the forehead,' explains Dr Dray, inserting eight eye-watering injections deep in to my face. Luckily, the anaesthetic cream takes the edge off, but only just.

I've barely recovered my breath when Dr Dray launches into the last part of the lift. More needles, but instead of filler, his syringe contains biphasic tricalcium phosphates (BTCPs). Found naturally in our bones and teeth, BTCPs are most commonly used in dental implants and bone grafts, where they help bond tissue to bone. Dr Dray's breakthrough has been to use these ingredients in a new way, injecting them deep into the lower face, where they shorten the fibres in the soft tissue to give a tightening effect. 'They're also powerful collagen stimulators,' he adds, grabbing the loose skin and jabbing his needle deep into my cheeks and neck.

Halfway through the treatment, Dr Dray holds up a mirror so I can see my half-finished face and compare the difference between the left and right. 'Look, you can see how your eye has opened up, see how your face has lifted here,' he says, indicating my jaw. It's true. There's a subtle, but definite difference between the two sides. He then lays me back down to do the other half.

By the time I leave the clinic, my face feels tight and tender and bruises have already started to appear above my left eyebrow. The next day I'm covered, not only in bruises (I count 10 in total), but a rash of angry red spots around the injection sites. Luckily they start to disappear almost as quickly as they came. Still. It reminds me that these treatments are not something

to be undertaken lightly and there are risks and side effects you're not always prepared for.

One week on, the bruises and spots have nearly gone and the compliments start to roll in. I get two, 'You look really well's and a friend says my face looks fuller. Certainly, my forehead looks smooth and my eyebrows are subtly lifted. It's like Botox, but I think it's better,

as the area is refreshed, rather than frozen. Plus, because it's achieved with filler, it will last more than twice as long.

Two weeks on, I can tell my lower face looks tighter, though it's subtle. The full effects, I'm told, will kick in over the coming weeks, peaking at six months, and lasting up to 15 – though the difference, I suspect, will be difficult to measure. One thing's for sure, at £950, the facelift lite is very much cheaper than the £6k I'd shell out for the real deal. And the recovery time – a week for

most people – is far less than a facelift, which can take four months to recover from properly. What's more, the treatment will suit anyone who doesn't like the idea of anything foreign in their face, as hyaluronic and BTCPs occur naturally in our skin and eventually break down.

As with so many anti-ageing treatments, I don't magically look younger, but I do look fresher and more glow-y. And if it can 'prevent' the onslaught of ageing advancing at full pelt, as Dr Dray said, then that's something to smile about, surely. ■

Contact Dr Dray's clinic on 020 7937 1031. From £400 for the 10-minute facelift, jowls only (for one syringe); £350 for the crown lift; £200 for the meso-lift

One week on, I get two, "You look really well"s and a friend says my face looks fuller'

BEAUTY TIPS & TREATMENTS AT...
Redonline.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPH JONTY DAVIES

5 OF THE BEST... LIFTING FACIALS

*You don't like knives or needles, so what are your options?
These treatments will all give you a pretty (if temporary) boost*

1 **EMMA HARDIE SIGNATURE FACIAL, £130 FOR 60 MINS.**
Hardie uses her signature pulling action to 'stimulate the repair of facial tissue', leaving it firmer and more lifted. Michaeljohn, London; 020 7629 6969.

2 **SU-MAN SIGNATURE FACIAL, £200 FOR 60 MINS.** Su-Man brings her shiatsu and Pilates expertise to facial massage, leaving skin

plumped and glowing. Anne Hathaway, Joely Richardson and Juliette Binoche are all fans. Away Spa, London; 020 7758 1071.

3 **ELEMIS PRO-COLLAGEN QUARTZ LIFT FACIAL, FROM £65 FOR 60 MINS.** This popular, time-trusted facial uses a micro-current to stimulate muscles and circulation for an instant firming effect. Nationwide; 01278 727 830.

4 **JOHN TSAGARIS LED LIGHT THERAPY PROGRAMME, £50 FOR 30 MINS.** Lie under a mask of collagen-stimulating lights for that tight, plump 'first day of holiday' feeling. London; 020 7235 4676.

5 **CARITA PRO-LIFT FIRMING FACIAL, FROM £90 FOR 90 MINS.** This classic facial will lift your spirits, as well your face. Nationwide, 020 7313 8780.