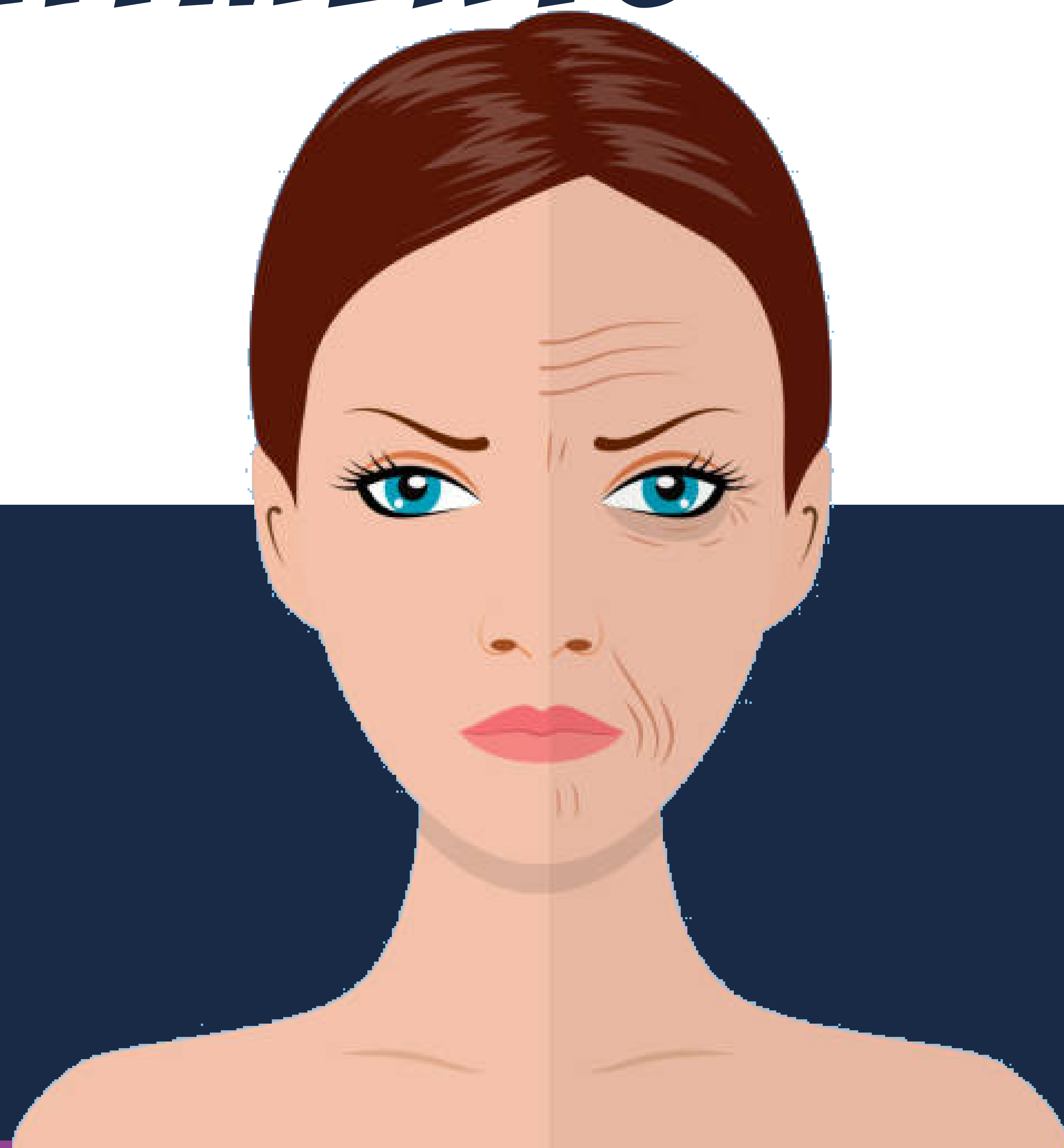


THE PROS AND CONS OF ANTI-AGING TREATMENTS



Anti-aging treatments are used to improve how people look by removing or reducing wrinkles, crow's feet, age spots and fine lines. These treatments usually focus on the face, but they can also be done on the neck, chest, and hands.

Chemical peels

Chemical peels are used to improve the appearance of photo-aged skin. Their primary effects are a smoothing and lightening of the skin. They can also be effective in reducing fine wrinkling, minor scars, and pigmentary problems such as age spots.

Depending on the chemical peel used, the procedure can differ. A special degreaser is used to clean the skin thoroughly. This is so that no oils remain on the skin. Afterwards, a chemical agent is placed on to the skin and left there for anywhere from three to five minutes. Most patients have a brief stinging sensation that goes away in a few minutes. However, there are some peels that have to stay on your skin for up to four hours. These are peels that are self-neutralising.

Chemical peels are classified into superficial, medium or deep chemical peeling agents depending on their mechanism of action. Superficial peeling uses agents that only reach the level of the epidermis, the top layer of skin. Medium depth peels go a little deeper to the superficial papillary dermis, which is the next layer down. Deep chemical peeling agents go deeper still into the reticular dermis (1).

Let's talk about the positives first. The advantages of chemical peels to fight the signs of aging are:

- Improved skin texture
- It smooths out the surface of your skin.
- Reduce fine lines and wrinkles.
- It reduces pigmentation and age spots on the skin.
- It reduces acne scarring.
- Reduced pore size
- It will give you firmer skin as it increases collagen production.
- Enhances cell turnover (causes the skin cells to shed at a more rapid rate, thus producing fresher new cells)
- Increase absorption of products applied afterwards.

(2)

With that said, it sounds like chemical peels are great, but here are some of their cons:

- Chemical peels should only be done by a professional who is trained and knows their stuff, especially if you plan on having it done regularly. This has a cost implication, as chemical peels are not cheap. They cost anywhere from \$100 to \$400 or more per peel. You should not exceed 2-3 peels per year.
- You cannot have a chemical peel if you have sensitive skin, sunburnt skin, have vitiligo, have auto-immune diseases such as psoriasis or rheumatoid arthritis, have cold sores or warts, are pregnant or nursing (3).
- Chemical peels can cause hyperpigmentation (increased tanner/darker areas of skin-if not finished at the right time) or hypopigmentation (less pigmented, lighter areas of skin-if over lasered). (4)

- Skin irritation, including burning, redness and stinging, can last for up to three days. The side effects depend on which strength of peel is used and how many layers are applied. Some clients also complain of post inflammatory erythema (PIE) later in the week following a chemical peel that causes blushing and flushing. Depending on how deep your chemical peel penetrates your skin, you also run the risk of scarring (5).

Botox

What is Botox and how does it work? Botox is a neurotoxin, Botulinum toxin, most commonly used in the medical field to reduce and prevent wrinkles caused by muscle movement. It works by temporarily paralyzing muscle groups, which can minimize certain facial expressions such as smiling and frowning.

The bacteria *Clostridium botulinum* yields the toxin that is the basis for Botox. Botulism, a potentially fatal form of food poisoning, is caused by the same toxin. Certain muscles are frozen by Botox injections, and the signals from some nerves are blocked. Depending on the area being treated, the effects tend to last anywhere from three to twelve months.

The pros, or reasons why people opt for Botox, are:

- It reduces and smooths fine lines and wrinkles.
- It improves the appearance of laughter lines (aka “crow's feet”).
- It reduces skin dimpling.
- It improves the appearance of a mouth at the corners and lip lines.
- Improve those unsightly neck muscles.(6)

The cons of this anti-aging treatment are:

- It can be painful to receive the injection, and the area where it goes in can be sore afterwards.
- The treated area can get swollen or bruised afterwards. This can last for a few hours up to a couple of days.
- Because you are actually being injected with a toxin, your immune system will fight against it. This can give you a headache or flu-like symptoms. Some people also report having an upset stomach, similar to that experienced with food poisoning.
- A short-lived lowering of the eyelids may also be caused by Botox injections in the face.
- Hopefully, if you are pregnant, you won't be thinking about anti-aging treatments. But it goes without saying that if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, having a Botox injection can harm your baby.
- You may also experience an allergic reaction to the toxin. If this is severe, seek medical help immediately (7).
- The price of Botox needs to be a consideration as it can cost between \$30 and \$600 (8).

Dermabrasion

Microdermabrasion is the use of a stream of fine crystals under pressure to strip off the outermost layers of skin. The process claims to improve the tone, texture and clarity of your face, neck, hands or body. It is often used to treat acne scars and discolouration. Microdermabrasion can also reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, pore size, age spots and enlarged pores. There are three types:

Diamond-tip: Dead skin cells are rubbed off, then sucked up with this unique gadget. This can pinpoint areas with accuracy, so it is frequently used around the eyes.

Crystal: Using crystal microdermabrasion, dead skin cells and the top layer of skin are removed by spraying the skin with tiny crystals. As with the diamond tip, the process involves removing the sloughed off skin cells and crystals by suction.

Hydra: This is a modern form of microdermabrasion that exfoliates the skin using water and oxygen.

The pros of this treatment are:

- There is no downtime like cosmetic surgery.
- Quick recovery time.
- It is painless.
- It improves fine lines.
- You will see immediate results; even after one treatment.
- Low cost compared to other professional anti-aging treatments.
- It can be done at home using creams or microdermabrasion equipment.

The cons of microdermabrasion are:

- Cannot reduce deep wrinkles or acne scars.
- It needs to be done regularly, every three to four weeks.(9)

Ultrasound skin tightening

The use of ultrasound technology is a relatively new, and largely unknown anti-aging professional treatment. It helps to tighten the skin and helps to increase collagen. This plumps up the skin and makes it look younger.

The pros of ultrasound treatment are:

- It takes less than an hour.
- It can be used on the face, neck and even décolletage.
- It reduces fine lines and wrinkles.
- It is not painful.
- One treatment lasts about a year.

Cons of ultrasound treatment

- Some people feel a tingling sensation that they may find unpleasant.
- The biggest downside to this treatment is that it can take a few months before the effects can be noticed.

(10)

As you can see, any procedure to help you look younger and keep aging at bay has to be weighed up. However, it can be worth it as long as you make sure that the practitioner is certified and has plenty of genuine, positive reviews.

It is worth shopping around before making a decision as there are unscrupulous practitioners who are all too willing to take your money but may not be hygienic, trained or experienced.

References

1. Basic chemical peeling: Superficial and medium-depth peels

https://www.evms.edu/media/departments/medical_group/aesthetic_center_new/Basic_chemical_peeling_-_Superficial_and_medium-depth_peels.pdf

2. Chemical peels

<https://www.whitehall-facialaesthetics.co.uk/treatments/chemical-peels/>

3. FAQ for chemical peels

<https://www.unionderm.com/procedures/chemical-peel-faq/>

4. The pros and cons of chemical peels: Are they worth it?

<https://www.readersdigest.co.uk/lifestyle/fashion-beauty/the-pros-and-cons-of-chemical-peels-are-they-worth-it>

5. Chemical Peel Side Effects

<https://www.docshop.com/education/dermatology/facial/chemical-peel/side-effects>

6. Botulinum Toxin

<https://www.plasticsurgery.org/cosmetic-procedures/botulinum-toxin>

7. Botulinum Toxin (Botox) for Facial Wrinkles

<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/treatments/what-is-botox-facial-wrinkles>

8. How much do fillers and Botox cost?

<https://www.plasticsurgery.org/news/blog/whats-behind-the-cost-of-botox-and-injectable-fillers>

9. Microdermabrasion: Health Benefits

<https://www.medicinenet.com/microdermabrasion/article.htm>

10. Ultherapy: Weigh the Pros and Cons of Non-Surgical Skin Tightening

<https://www.mirrormirrorhouston.com/blog/ultherapy-weigh-pros-cons-non-surgical-skin-tightening>