

ESSAY GROUND CONTROL

Ning Chao explores the brave new world of antigravity skincare

Sun, smog, and pollution aren't the only bad guys accelerating your skin's aging process. (You've stopped smoking, right?) While countless products exist to help counter the effects of the aforementioned factors, gravity—which plays a huge role in how much your face sags—is now getting attention in the beauty world. “We’re fighting its downward pull all day long,” explains Beverly Hills plastic surgeon Dr. Karan Dhir. The face starts falling as volume (i.e., baby fat) disappears, weakening the scaffolding holding up your facial features. But you don’t have to travel to gravity-free deep space to keep your face youthful. New skin treatments are focusing on firming, lifting, and replacing lost volume to stave off the basset-hound effect.

According to Dhir, collagen and elastin levels drop in the mid-30s, making skin more susceptible to gravity’s pull. In 20 years, the skin drops as much as four millimeters, according to Dior Science. “The brows come downward, the under-eye area hollows, smile and frown lines deepen, and neck skin sags,” says Dhir, who recommends ingredients like stem cells, peptides, and retinoids, which boost collagen and elastin production.

While Botox is well-known for its wrinkle-smoothing abilities, New York dermatologist Dr. Dendy Engelman noticed an interesting side effect when she started injecting it into the scalp to reduce sweating (allowing patients to go directly from Drybar to SoulCycle without ruining their blowouts, natch): brow lifting. “I’m not saying this is a substitute to plastic surgery, but when you put Botox in the scalp, the pore size of the hair follicles shrinks,” explains Engelman, who cites a recently rediscovered 2008 study published in *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology* where patients reported reduced pore size. “If you tighten those follicles [50 to 100 in a typical treatment for scalp sweating], you can get the facial effect of an eyebrow lift.” The results last seven to 12 months.

In the quest to increase collagen and elastin levels, French companies Caudalie and Dior are innovating ingredients that push the plumping envelope. In partnership with Harvard Medical School professor David Sinclair, a pioneer in resveratrol research, Caudalie has filed a patent for its technology combining the antioxidant resveratrol and hydrating micro hyaluronic acid to increase collagen production by energizing skin cells’ mitochondria. Used in Caudalie’s Resveratrol Lift products, this pairing essentially encourages skin to act younger and repair itself for a plumper, firmer effect. Meanwhile, Dior recently announced that its “boosted longoza extract” (derived from the seeds of a ginger-like plant native to Madagascar) increases collagen and elastin production by 19 percent, and reverses gravity-related sagging by up to 27 percent after one month of use (tested with a weighted patch on the face). Dior’s new Capture Totale Multi-Perfection creams all join the extract with algae and polymers to ensure skin stays firm.

On the opposite side of the globe, “face workouts” are increasing in popularity in Asia. Designed to lift and redefine contours through exercise, there’s Dr.Jart+’s Liftra Shaper from South Korea, a metal roller that massages skin, supposedly to improve lymphatic drainage and elasticity; in Japan, there’s PAO Facial Fitness, a gadget you hold in your mouth. Dhir is somewhat skeptical of these devices but does note that exercise in general will increase circulation, which helps in skin rejuvenation. That said, avoid certain workouts: “If you ever watch a long-distance runner’s face in slow motion, it’s horrendous,” Engelman warns. According to her, high-impact aerobics can also put you on the fast track toward sagging skin. “If you do exercise that accentuates gravity’s pull, you’re accelerating its effect on the face,” Engelman says. Once or twice a week is reasonable, she adds, but over time, all that bouncing will take its toll. Perhaps it’s time to try another new craze instead: antigravity yoga, whose inverted poses boost blood flow to the face and help flip gravity on its head. **mc**

Scientists are developing new ways to reverse the appearance of aging brought on by gravity

FACE LIFTERS



LANCÔME Rénergie Lift Multi-Action, \$92.



DR.JART+ Liftra Shaper, \$80.



ALGENIST Power Advanced Wrinkle Fighter 360° Eye Serum, \$70.



GLAMGLOW GravityMud Firming Treatment, \$69.



DIOR Capture Totale Multi-Perfection Crème in Universal Texture, \$165. For information on where to buy, see Shopping Directory.