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# spa

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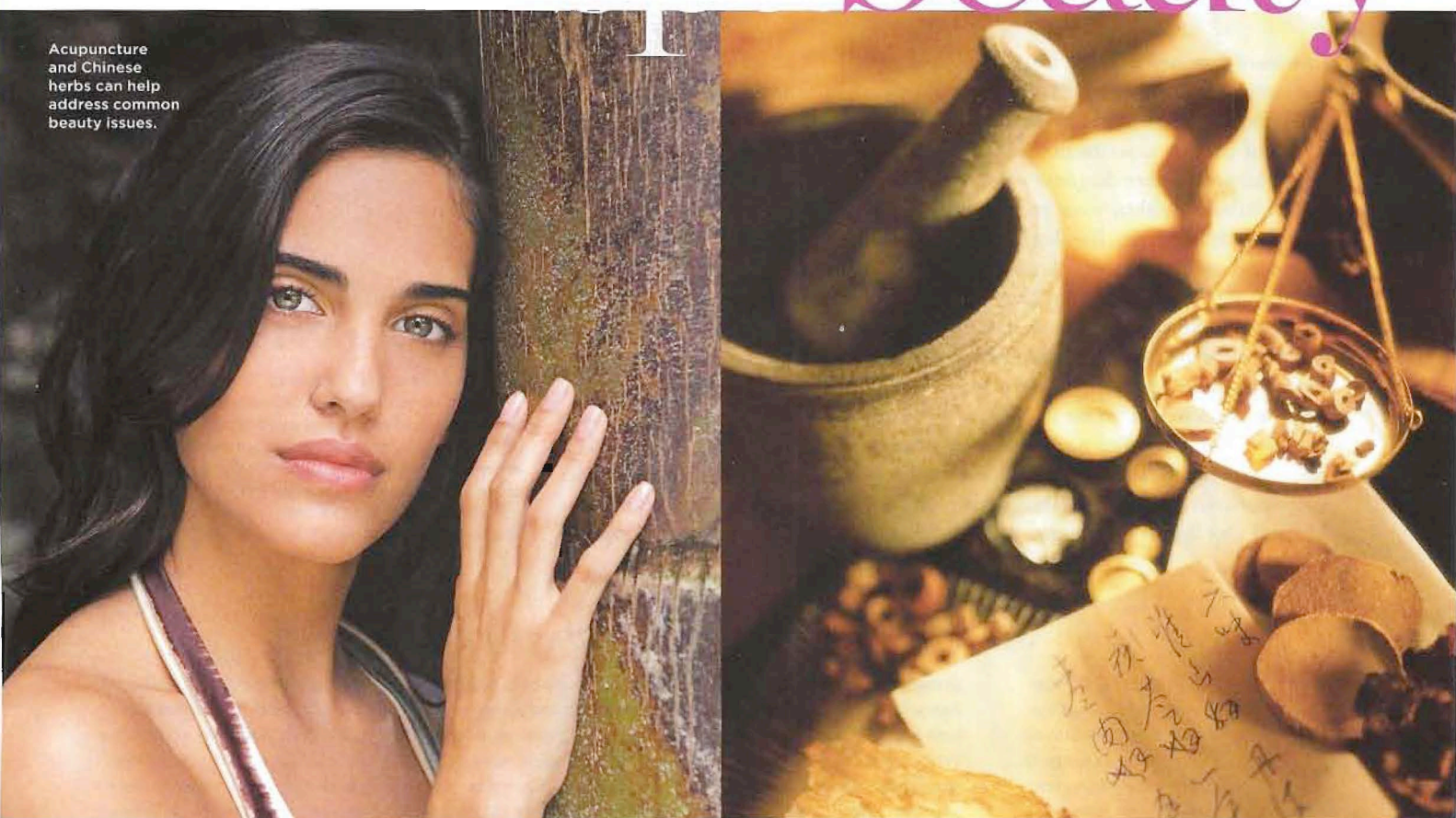


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Acupuncture and Chinese herbs can help address common beauty issues.



{ FOCUS ON TCM }

## naturally radiant

The herbs and acupuncture of Traditional Chinese Medicine help boost both inner health and outer beauty. BY RACHEL GRUMMAN

**N**EEDLES AREN'T often associated with spa treatments, but the pairing is becoming more common as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)—an ancient medical system that has been practiced for thousands of years—is woven into spa services throughout the country.

Unlike standard beauty procedures, which are often designed to target a specific problem, TCM isn't about spot treatments. The focus is on techniques

that bring the body into balance and, by doing so, address skin issues such as acne and fine lines as well as dry hair and nails. In other words, when viewed through the lens of TCM, beauty problems aren't just skin deep.

"Our hair, skin, and nails are reflections of our internal organs," notes Eunice Kan, licensed acupuncturist and an alumna of the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine. "When we have dry skin or breakouts on the

outside, it means our bodies are out of balance on the inside."

Curious? We thought so. Here's a look at some common TCM treatments and techniques that can lead to a more beautiful you.

**FACE MAPPING** The concept behind face mapping is that areas of your face are linked with seemingly unrelated organs in the body through paths of energy called meridians. For example, »



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the temples are said to reflect the liver, while the cheeks are linked to the lungs. Think of it as an assessment tool that helps the practitioner diagnose what is out of balance within your body and how best to treat it. Breakouts, for instance, usually mean there's an overabundance of "heat" (yang) in the body, so the practitioner may focus on treatments that balance heat with cold (yin). "As we get older, especially women, we become yin deficient, so we feel hotter and our skin, hair, and nails become drier," explains Kris Haug, a licensed acupuncturist at the All About Me Medical Day Spa in San Diego.

**CHINESE HERBS** Herbs are often prescribed in tandem with acupuncture to help restore balance, improving the appearance of hair, nails, and skin. Tailored to the individual and his or her ailment, herbs can be taken in capsule, powder, or tincture form; consumed as a tea; or applied as a masque. For example, bitter herbs such as dandelion help combat heat in the body that's linked to acne, while sweet herbs are nourishing, helping to moisturize dry skin and hair. But one herb alone can't cure your beauty woes. "We'll recommend a formulation that addresses all of the different issues in the body, since it's about putting the body back into balance," says Haug.



**tip** There are both "certified" and "licensed" acupuncturists. The difference? A certified acupuncturist has done about 300 hours of training at home or at a seminar and may have little or no experience with actual patients before certification. Licensed acupuncturists, however, log 2,700 hours of training, treat at least 250 patients before getting licensed, and must pass a national certification exam.

## the acupuncture facelift: better than botox?

**BOTOX IS EXPENSIVE;** surgery is scary. But does the acupuncture facelift live up to its name? Not exactly. "A facelift lasts for years, and with the acupuncture treatments regular tune-ups are required to maintain results," explains Bill Reddy, licensed acupuncturist and vice

president of the American Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. While you won't get results as dramatic as those you'd see with fillers or surgery (cosmetic acupuncturists are the first to point out that a better term for the treatment is "acupuncture facial"), what

you can expect is a reduction of fine lines and deeper wrinkles, as well as better skin and muscle tone. Results can be seen after a series of 10 treatments (\$1,500–\$2,000, 45 to 60 minutes per session) given over the course of five weeks and followed by a maintenance visit

every three months. But how does it work? "Studies suggest that needling stimulates fibroblast activity, resulting in an overall increase in collagen," says Reddy. In other words, cosmetic acupuncture may increase the flexibility and volume of facial skin—subtly, yes, but naturally.

## TCM beauty buys



- 1 **Dr. Jessica Wu Cosmeceuticals White Peony Eye Contour Potent** Chinese botanicals reduce lines, dark circles, and undereye bags. (\$135, drjessicawu.com)
- 2 **Shē Essential Beauty Washing** Grains Chinese pearl and jasmine tea help tighten pores and draw toxins from

- the skin. (\$30, sheessentialbeauty.com)
- 3 **Cinq Mõndes Onguent de Jeunesse aux 7 Plantes Chinoises** Seven botanicals, including ginseng and lotus, provide hydration to aging skin. (\$89, cinqmondes.com)
- 4 **Timeless Secret Whisper Multi-Active Emulsion** The antioxidant power of

- Chinese Pu-erh tea improves skin elasticity and prevents fine lines. (\$135, basic-essentials.com)
- 5 **Chi Herbal Formulas Jade & Burdock Detoxifying Soak** Organic herbal ingredients penetrate the skin to remove toxins, relieve stress, and leave skin silky smooth. (\$30, shopskincareonline.com)