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WomensHealthMag.com

Trick or Treat?

Find out which anti-aging procedures and products will actually scare away wrinkles and spots...and which are just money suckers.

By Karina Giglio

“Face-lift in a bottle!” “Ten years younger in an hour!” Some days, it’s easier to believe in vampires (especially ones who look like Robert Pattinson) than the latest anti-aging claims. But that doesn’t stop us mere mortals from shelling out for the latest potions and treatments that promise eternal youth. Women spent \$1.5 billion on anti-aging products in 2011 alone! “New anti-aging technologies keep popping up, but many aren’t backed by science and may not do much more than a basic moisturizer,” says Jeannette Graf, M.D., an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Consult this guide to determine what’s b.s. and what will really make you, if not forever young, at least younger looking.

Beauty Buzz



Rotating Facial Brushes

The claim: Revved-up rotators like the Clarisonic, Olay Pro-X Advanced Cleansing System, and Neutrogena Wave Sonic boldly go where hands alone cannot: deep into the pores to remove every trace of dirt and makeup. The result: baby's-butt smoothness (minus the diaper rash).

Trick or treat? **Treat.**

These are brushes with greatness, dermatologists rave. "It's so much easier to control the level of abrasion you get with a brush than with an acid or scrub, plus it's gentle enough for people with sensitive skin," says Anne Chapas, M.D., an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at New York University School of Medicine. Sloughing off the top layer of dull dead cells creates an immediate radiance, but there are long-term benefits too: Eliminating all that pore-clogging gunk allows anti-aging creams and serums to penetrate deeper and, hence, work better. To use, start on the lowest setting, hold the brush very lightly against your skin, and use a mild, gentle cleanser.

Radiofrequency Energy

The claim: The doctor's office evolastin procedure tightens a saggy face, resulting in up to a third of the effect of a face-lift for less than two-thirds of the moolah (\$3,000 versus \$10,000). **Trick or treat? **Treat.**** To grow elastin and create your

own natural filler, you need to push heat—154°F—far into the skin and keep it there for a few seconds. "During evolastin, five pairs of ultrathin needles delve directly into the dermis—it's the perfect combination of being in the right place for the right time," explains Chapas. A single one-hour treatment covers from cheeks to neck (without pain, thanks to anesthesia), but expect redness and swelling for a couple of days. You'll see full results in three to six months.



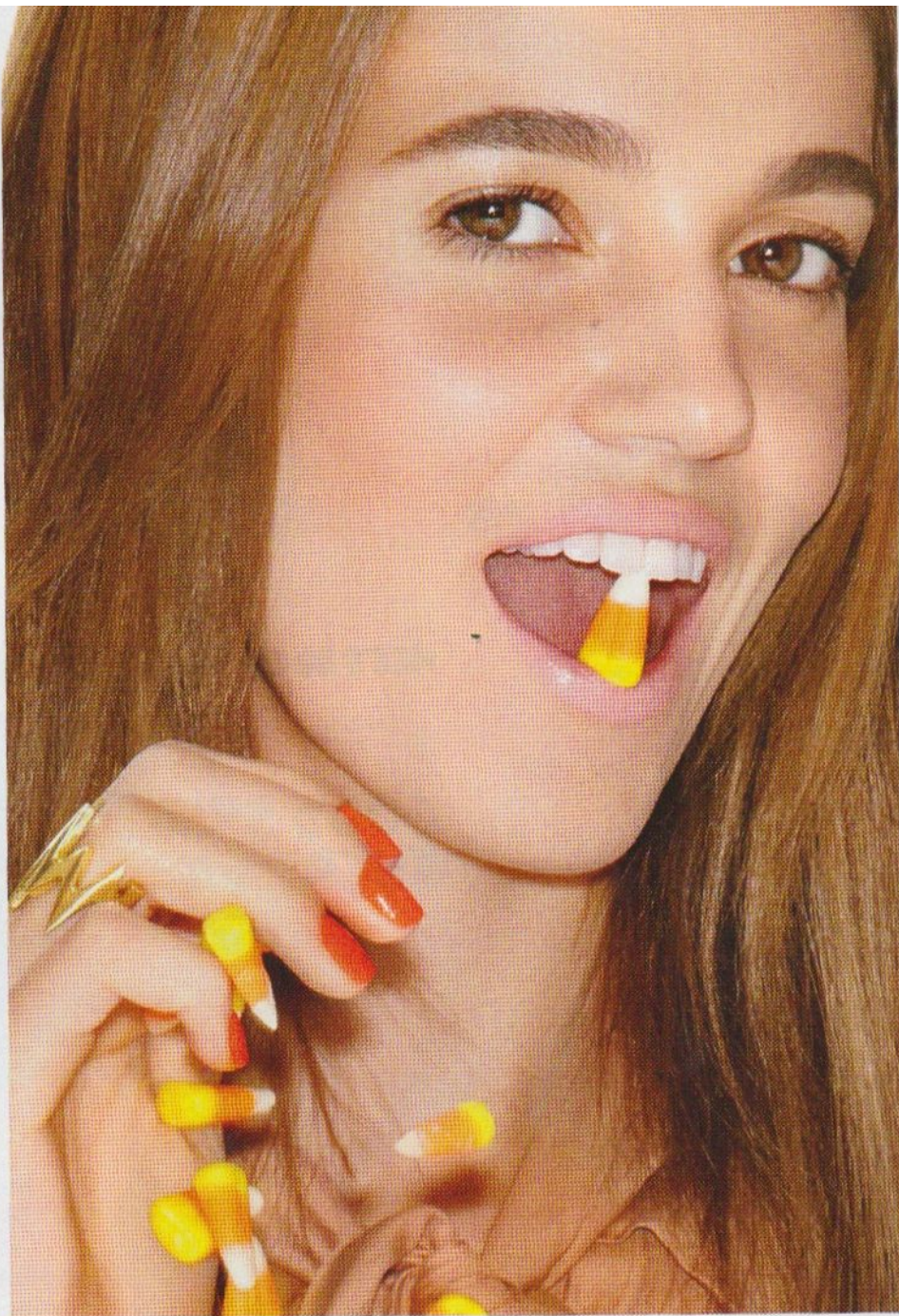
Oxygenating Products

The claim: "Liquid oxygen" may sound like fuel for the Terminator, but skin-care companies theorize it may fuel your skin by penetrating deep to jack up cells' adenosine

triphosphate production (ATP), which slows down as we age. When this happens, the body doesn't pump out as much collagen.

Trick or treat? **The jury is still out.**

"When we breathe, oxygen goes into our cells and is made into ATP," says Graf. "But not a lot of science substantiates that a product can deliver liquid oxygen into the cells." An oxygen peel, however, does have "an exfoliating effect that helps brighten drab skin," says Graf. Try Philosophy The Oxygen Peel (\$55, sephora.com).





Snake Venom

The claim: Venom protects its slithering host by paralyzing the enemy. In creams and serums, it does the same to skin threats—a.k.a. the muscle contractions that cause crow's-feet and brow furrows.

Trick or treat? Trick... First off, no actual venom is involved (because, um, that would be toxic). Synthetic peptides, like those found in Sonya Dakar Skincare Ultraluxe-9 (\$185, sonyadakar.com), are based on the real deal and inhibit facial muscles at the nerve endings for a very mild and short-lived smoothing effect. "The concept is similar to Botox, and it does help the skin on the forehead and around the eyes, but how much it helps depends on the delivery system," says Fredric Brandt, M.D., a dermatologist in New York City and Miami. "Most creams and serums get very little of the active ingredient into the muscle because they can't even get past the dermis."

LED Facial Lights

The claim: They deliver red and yellow light to the mid-dermis to reduce the signs of sun damage. **Trick or treat? Treat,** but only if a doc is administering the treatment. Doctor's-office LEDs like GentleWaves harness anti-inflammatory powers to reverse skin damage, like the kind that cause wrinkles and spots, and protect against future signs of aging. "I put sunburned patients under GentleWaves and the burn is gone that evening, along with the damage it created," says Tina Alster, M.D., a clinical professor of dermatology at Georgetown University Medical Center. "It prevents wrinkling and discoloration too." Each session, during which a painless light circulates your face, costs about \$100 and takes just 30 to 45 seconds. But don't waste your dough on an at-home device. "You'd need to use

it for up to an hour every other day to get any level of effective energy," says Chapas.



Microcurrent Facials

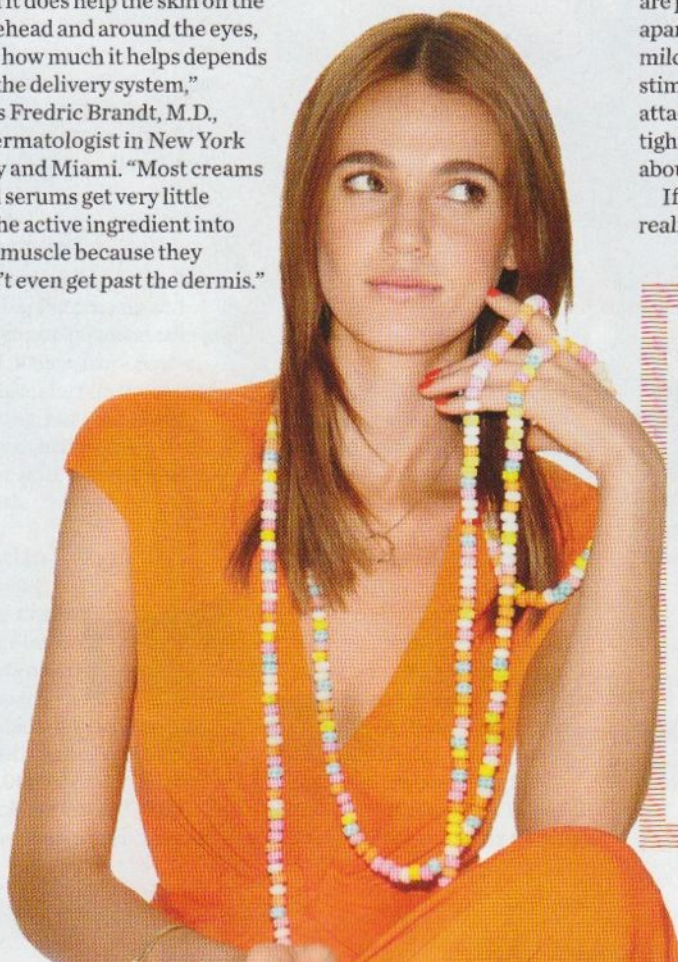
The claim: Electricity is your complexion's personal trainer, stimulating the skin and underlying muscles to help contour your jawline, lift your brows, and make your cheekbones appear sharper. Whether or not Ben Franklin would approve, A-listers like Kate Winslet swear by facialist Tracie Martyn's Resculpting Facial Lift (\$287 to \$325) before awards shows. **Trick or treat? Treat.** "Our bodies are electrical organs, so every cell functions through a series of electrical charges, including those in skin," says Graf. When mini electrodes are placed a few inches apart on the face, a circuit of mild (painless) electricity stimulates the skin and the attached muscle for noticeable tightening and lifting that lasts about three to four hours.

If regular \$300 facials aren't realistic, the NuFace Trinity

(left, \$325, mynuface.com) is FDA-cleared for home use. Its computerized sensors track how dry or oily your skin is and determine what strength of current will make the biggest impact. It's been shown to improve circulation and facial tone when used for five to 15 minutes five days a week. "You'll see some lift, especially in areas with thinner skin, like around the eyes," says Alster.

Oxygen Facials

The claim: A stream of pressurized oxygen smooths away wrinkles in minutes. **Trick or treat? Trick.** While there's no question that oxygen speeds wound healing and increases circulation, there's a big difference between sitting in a proven hyperbaric chamber—like those used in hospitals to treat serious burns—and having it sprayed onto your face at a spa. Yes, an oxygen facial will make your skin rosy right afterward, but likely not because of the oxygen itself. "Between the pressure of pumping oxygen and moisturizer onto the skin and the manual stimulation, of course skin looks swollen and plump," says Alster. Save your cash and give yourself a hot-towel massage at home. ■



DON'T BE SCARED

Retinol has decades of data to support its ability to reduce wrinkles and fade spots. Just choose a potion for your skin type.

OILY OR ACNE-PRONE: Your thicker skin can withstand a strong dose of retinol, so go for the highest over-the-counter strength available, 1 percent. Try SkinCeuticals Retinol 1.0 (\$59, skinceuticals.com).

DRY: To avoid irritation, look for a product with a cream base, like RoC Retinol Correxion Sensitive Night Cream (\$20, at drugstores). Start off using it just once a week; if no peeling or redness occurs after a month, go for twice a week. On off nights, calm your skin with a peptide-rich moisturizer.

SENSITIVE: If retinol were rapper Rick Ross, retinaldehyde would be Drake—a kinder, gentler version. Apply it three times a week, every other day. After a month, increase to four times a week, then to five at the two-month mark, and so on. Try Eau Thermale Avène Rétrinal+ 0.05 Cream (\$61, dermstore.com).