

IN THE WAITING ROOM OF Esther Fieldgrass's EF Medispa, there is an aphorism emblazoned on the mirror: 'Great skin doesn't happen by chance, it happens by appointment.' As a middle-aged woman, I can vouch for that. In my twenties, I was in awe of American Rich Girl's Skin, envying those alabaster-flawless faces with their entitled glossy sheen. That badge of Upper East Side opulence struck me every time I visited New York. But back in Blighty, 30 years ago, English roses did not entertain anything as expensive-sounding as a dermatologist unless cursed with chronic acne. Unquestioningly, we accepted that our skin, like our finances and furniture, was inherited from our parents.

In my own case, however, what passed muster as a good complexion in my youth had morphed into a mottled, mole-ridden and – frankly – meh face in midlife. Is it possible, I wondered, to achieve Wealthy Woman's Skin in menopause? To have that creamy complexion that shrieks of affluence, aged 55? I soon realised that it takes time, money, patience and a little pain to achieve spotless skin. As Dr Susan Mayou, a leading consultant dermatologist and co-founder of the Cadogan Clinic in Chelsea, was to tell me: 'Any cosmetic improvement is directly in proportion to the pain and expense.'

First up was ridding my face of two moles that were more Nanny McPhee than Cindy Crawford. One, jutting from the side of my chin, sprouted witchy hairs (which coarsen through menopausal loss of oestrogen). The other bulged in the crease by my nose. Sitting in Dr Ross Perry's Harley Street reception, I was gripped with the nonsensical fear that my chin mole had become part of my facial identity. Who would I be without it? Dr Perry – whose surgical career includes NHS skin cancer reconstruction – is also an expert in the non-sexy art of mole, wart and skin-tag removal. While I was wittering on about my love-hate relationship with my mole, he swiftly sliced it off.

After a dab of anaesthetic, this was a painless procedure. Surveying my face afterwards, I was stunned: I looked a decade younger without those disfiguring protuberances. The post-care was a breeze

and I applied cold-sore plasters to the wound for one week. A clear liquid oozed for a bit, then went satisfyingly scabby.

Next on the agenda was having a splodge of sun-damage removed from my cheek. At the Cadogan Clinic, Dr Mayou sprayed it with liquid nitrogen, which is icy-cold and feels like a sharp burn. She warned me that the treated area would darken over the following week, then create a crust which would flake off. During the days of the stain, I was reminded that, in the rejuvenation game, patience is the remedy. And what joy when the pink, virginal skin revealed itself.

Now addicted to dermatological perfection, I visited Dr Mayou's vascular nurse



FACE THE FUTURE
*It takes patience, money
and resilience to achieve
glossy mature skin*

specialist at the Cadogan Clinic. Angela Williams duly removed the tiny red veins clustered near my nostrils with her Norseld laser, meanwhile warning me against using hot cleansing cloths against the skin, because the heat bursts little red blood cells. The treatment caused a minor, wincing discomfort, like having an elastic band snapped on your face. You need to have a patch-test first – as sometimes the skin can go white – but I passed; and on my return, my blemishes became history.

Next was a trip to the Harrods Wellness Clinic to see Dr Costas Papageorgiou for one of his medical-grade Hydrafacials.

This Greek god has an almost spiritual, soothing manner. A self-confessed 'visual aesthete', for him, good skin is all about light-reflection, which makes skin appear brighter. 'There is no quick fix,' he reminded me; still, his facials 'kickstart the process, and give instant glow'. The heavy-hitter in his facial armoury is his Laser Genesis, which penetrates two millimetres below the surface of the skin to stimulate collagen and cellular regeneration. The tightening effect is immediate.

Next stop, the Taktouk Clinic, for a textural overhaul. I was seeing Professor Firas Al Niaimi – the only professor of laser dermatology in the UK – who is a fan of the Frax 1940: a non-ablative (so it doesn't damage the epidermis) laser which smooths the skin, fades pigmentation and gives a dewy glow. 'Some patients book in annually, others do this a few weeks before a big event,' he explained. 'It makes the skin look amazing in photographs.' He applied numbing cream before gliding the handpiece across my face and neck (the sensation is pleasantly warm) and I left an hour later, my face flushed and feeling slightly tight. Over the following days, tiny dark dots appeared, before flaking off – but in less than a week my skin was silky-soft and luminous, and even make-up glided on with ease.

I felt similarly (and literally) uplifted after a Le Supreme XO rejuvenating treatment with EF Medispa's gifted therapist, Kristin Heider Persson. Combining fine silk microneedling with the infusion of exosomes – tiny molecular messengers which, once infused into the skin, trigger an impressive surge of collagen and elastin – the result was an instantaneous firming around the eyes and mid-face. True, the skin felt taut and reddish afterwards, but appeared pleasingly boosted. I used a special cleanser and SPF for the next three days and, one week later, my complexion had the supple glossiness I'd always craved.

The effects of microneedling are no less astonishing than those of Profilllo, an intensely concentrated hyaluronic acid formula that stimulates collagen to bolster elastin production. The day after I left Dr Suha Kersh's 23MD clinic in Chelsea with a spattering of post-injection ▷