

"Worldwide Guide 2006: 25 Life-Changing Treatments"

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Acupuncture Facelift

"Stomach 5" to lift the cheeks and jowls, "stomach 3" to reduce smile lines, "gall bladder 14" to raise the eyebrows: These cryptic notations make perfect sense if you're performing an acupuncture facial rejuvenation. They denote the invisible circuits of energy on the face that are connected to organs and through which flows our chi, or life force.

In Chinese medicine, health is related to a proper balance of chi in the body, and tiny needles are used to correct the various imbalances. (In Western terms, the needles stimulate neurological, immunological and endocrine responses that cause the body to release healing chemicals.)it usually takes less than 20 minutes to place the needles on the face and neck, with special attention paid to the areas that need the most help, such as furrows between the eyes or the lines that run from nose to mouth -- as well as various points below the knees and elbows, favored areas for balancing the body's energy. "I may insert a needle on the leg to tighten the forehead," After eight to 10 treatments, fine lines disappear, flabby jowls firm up and freckles and age spots fade, say patients and practitioners. But even a single treatment adds luster to the complexion by stimulating blood flow and relaxing the facial muscles.

Of course, that's incidental to the deeper work going on, says acupuncturist Robert MacDonald, director of healing at exhale in New York City. "Our goal is to bring the body's organs and energetic flow into balance. When you have inner health, you look vital -- your face has color, your skin is elastic and your eyes are clear and focused. That's beauty right there."

