

## I'VE SPENT 2 MONTHS TRYING FANCY SPA FACIALS, AND THESE ARE THE ONES THAT ACTUALLY WORK

Plus at-home recommendations for those of you who can't make it for an appointment.



So, remember that [bad facial experience](#) I had? Some of you left comments saying that THIS is why you were scared to get a facial. Let me set the record straight: Most experiences are nothing at all like that, okay? Facials are generally a good way to give your skin a little more TLC than usual, so don't fear them.

Of course, if you have easygoing skin, a facial is a nice treat, but it's not a necessity. For those of us with breakout-prone skin, though, facials can be [life-changing](#) -- no exaggeration. I didn't want to believe it, mostly because deep down, I am a penny pincher. But when I saw how much smoother and clearer my complexion was, I decided monthly facials just might be worth it.

Of course, not all facials are created equal. Generally, if you are just being [cleansed and masked](#), I don't see the point. But there are truly some treatments that are stunningly effective. I've spent the last two months trying various fancy face treatments -- and these are the ones that actually *work* (plus at-home recos for those of you who can't make it to NYC for an appointment).

**If you want to truly know what your issues are: Dermalogica Skin Treatment** (Face mapping is free; skin treatment is \$120.)

[Dermalogica](#) is a straightforward, research-driven skin care brand; likewise, its Soho "[concept space](#)" is refreshingly free of bells and whistles. Face treatments happen in a big white pod with lighting that changes color -- it creates a nice ambience. My esthetician cleansed my skin, gave me gentle extractions, applied a calming mask, and buzzed my zits with a high-frequency wand. At the end of the facial, she face-mapped me; Dermalogica trains its estheticians in this sort of complexion cartography. Basically, you get a little annotated diagram of your face, showing where you're dry/oily/whatever. So if you're a visual learner, it helps you remember where to put each product. (In my case, I have both oily and dehydrated skin. Yay?) Anyway, my skin looked dewy and flawless afterward, with no irritation -- a clear win.

**To treat combination skin at home:** I have been using Dermalogica Skin Hydrating Booster ([\\$56](#)) for the last two weeks, and it has the seemingly magical ability to treat my dehydrated forehead while simultaneously keeping my oil glands in check. And you need only, like, two drops, so the bottle will last a while.

**If you want firmer skin: Joanna Vargas's Triple Crown Facial** (treatment \$400 with Joanna, \$250 with other estheticians)

Two words: immediate results. Seriously, if you want to see your skin become less puffy, tighter, and more toned, don't think twice. Joanna Vargas works with a ton of celebrities (she did this facial for Karlie Kloss, Michelle Williams, and Sofia Coppola before the [Met Gala](#)) and has an easygoing, very down-to-earth persona. I'd heard the hype about her [Triple Crown Facial](#), and now I *get it*. Joanna started by doing a diamond peel, which exfoliates dead skin without being rough. Then, she went over my face with a microcurrent device -- it's two handheld prongs that funnel small amounts of electricity to the skin, which stimulates the facial muscles and makes 'em tight. Halfway through this part of the treatment, she gave me a mirror, and I basically looked like Two-Face -- the treated side was perky and firm, while the untreated side looked tired and loopy-goosy in comparison. The whole thing finished off with a blast of oxygen, which basically made my complexion glow. Honestly, I looked at least five years younger, and the results lasted for a few days.

**To brighten your complexion at home:**

Philosophy makes a lot of good peels, but its oxygen peel ([\\$58](#)) is incredibly gentle (and it's fun to mix up and apply, too). You won't get the lifting effect that Joanna does at her spa, but it creates that much-coveted glow, which is pretty great.

**If you aren't into Botox: Intraceuticals** (treatment anywhere from \$100-\$250)

Okay, if you are getting forehead lines or brow furrows, try an Intraceuticals treatment. I went in to see [Dr. Nigma Talib](#), a naturopathic doctor who splits her time between London and NYC. After cleansing me with a [Clarisonic](#), Dr. Talib got the Intraceuticals action going. The machine uses pressurized oxygen to deliver a serum deep into skin, and the ingredients are all pretty major. It has hyaluronic acid (which helps plump the skin), antioxidants (essential for long-term skin health), and -- customized for my needs -- Atoxelene, a sort of natural "no-tox" to relax expression lines. When it was all done, I looked in the mirror and was baffled by how much fresher I looked. My forehead was completely smooth, my cheeks looked plumper, and the "11" lines between my brows were gone. Apparently, Madonna OWNS one of these machines, and if I had the dough, I would buy one as well. The treatments aren't cheap, but I've already started saving up so I can get this done before my wedding. It's that good.

**To get your forehead lines in check:** Intraceuticals makes a wand ([\\$89](#)) with its Atoxelene serum, and it *feels* like it keeps me from frowning. I also swear by Frownies ([\\$20](#)), which are these little gummy-backed papers that keep you from frowning while you sleep. I look dumb wearing them, but in the morning, damned if my frown lines aren't milder.

**If you ain't got no time for that: HydraFacial MD** (treatment anywhere from \$100-\$300)

[HydraFacial MD](#) is a genius idea for people who want to see results but don't want to spend two hours at a spa or medical office. The machine's tip cleanses, it exfoliates, it does a light glycolic/salicylic peel, and it performs extractions with a vacuum tip before delivering a hydrating serum. Yep, it actually sucks the clogs out of your skin -- which I very much enjoyed, because I got to look at all of the sebaceous plugs after the fact. (It is always satisfying to see all of the junk that was lodged in one's face.) The painless treatment takes about 30 to 45 minutes. I had two HydraFacials this year, and both of them left my skin looking much brighter and clearer. I wish my esthetician had used the optional LED treatment lights (which can rejuvenate skin or kill acne bacteria), but I probably need to learn to speak up more.

**If you want to clean up your pores in a flash:** Neutrogena Naturals Purifying Pore Scrub ([\\$6.99](#)) isn't harsh, and if you use it regularly, your pores will thank you. (Well, not literally, but if they could talk, they would.)

Surprise, my skin has been almost consistently clear for months. Which really goes to show you that for a lot of us, clear and radiant skin doesn't just happen on its own -- it takes time, care, and money. My treatments were comped, but I think I'm going to keep it up on my own dime, because I honestly never thought my skin could actually look like this, and I feel more confident when I'm not worrying about [throbbing zits](#) or whatever.

What about you? Will you invest in next-level face treatments, or are you a DIY, mask-at-home sort of woman? Oh, and yet again, shameless plug for my beauty website, [The Glowhow](#). Visit! Say hi! We'll be pals.