



## Thinking Outside the Botox

Save face by seeking alternative routes.

BY BARBARA HEY

You don't have to be injected, picked at, poked, or peeled to bring a bloom to your cheeks, a lift to your chin, or a smooth line to your jaw. While spas and doctors' offices offer myriad procedures to beautify skin, few qualify as "natural" and fewer still as gentle. Botox and fillers (read "botulinum toxin" and "chemicals") can result in bruising, inflammation, discomfort, and some recovery time. When did skincare become a contact sport?

Instead of quick fixes that plump and numb, consider noninvasive, soothing treatments that use sound, light, or electrical current to stimulate the skin so it can heal and renew itself. These more holistic approaches address the underlying causes of dull, slack skin, such as internal imbalances or the cumulative effect of passing years. They work gently and naturally to restore healthy, vibrant skin tone and texture.

### TUNING IN FOR A TUNE-UP

The face, according to Chinese medicine, reflects both the body's overall health and one's equanimity of spirit. "A

beautiful face is clear, allowing the spirit to shine through," says Mary Elizabeth Wakefield, acupuncturist and founder of the Chi-Akra Center in New York City. She developed Facial Soundscapes™, a specific sound-healing protocol using tuning forks on acupuncture points to correct imbalances throughout the body, thus improving facial tone. "The system is based on Oriental Medicine, acupuncture with resonance," she says, and it offers an option to those who seek the benefits of facial acupuncture without the needles. The vibration of tuning forks on meridian points produces the same effect as a needle in the same location, she says. For the treatment, Wakefield uses two tuning forks in tandem. After tapping them against a hard surface to make them vibrate, she places them on specific points on the body and face. Sound waves emanate from each tuning fork and reverberate throughout the body.

In Wakefield's treatment you feel the vibration and simultaneously hear the sound of the tuning forks. The sound has a primal, resonant quality—like a gong, prayer howl, or even trumpeting whales.

"Fundamentally, we're the stuff of those vibrations," says Robert MacDonald, director of healing at Exhale Mind/Body Spa, a chain of wellness-focused day spas based in New York City. "If you think about the effect of a

needle on an acupuncture point, it's just a tool to transfer energy," he says. "It's like a pebble dropped in the water, with the energy radiating outward." Sound vibration stimulates in the same way, starting from a specific acupuncture point.

Katie Mink, an acupuncturist in Berkeley, California, also incorporates Facial Soundscapes™ in her practice. Testing it out on herself first, Mink, a 43-year-old with fair skin, noticed a difference after four treatments. "I've seen a lift in my double chin, a tightening in the jaw, a firming over the cheekbones. It's like sculpting." Wakefield believes the tuning fork treatments (like acupuncture) improve circulation of the blood and lymphatic system, which may account for its firming effect. Wakefield recommends 10 to 12 treatments (at a price of \$100 to \$150 per session), followed by "tune-ups" as needed. For more information, visit her website at [www.chiakra.com](http://www.chiakra.com) and click on Facial Soundscapes.



"Facial Soundscapes offers the benefits of acupuncture without needles."