



On Pins and Needles

Skin smoothing gets right to the point

by Cheryl Fenton (<http://www.lifezette.com/author/cherylfenton/>)

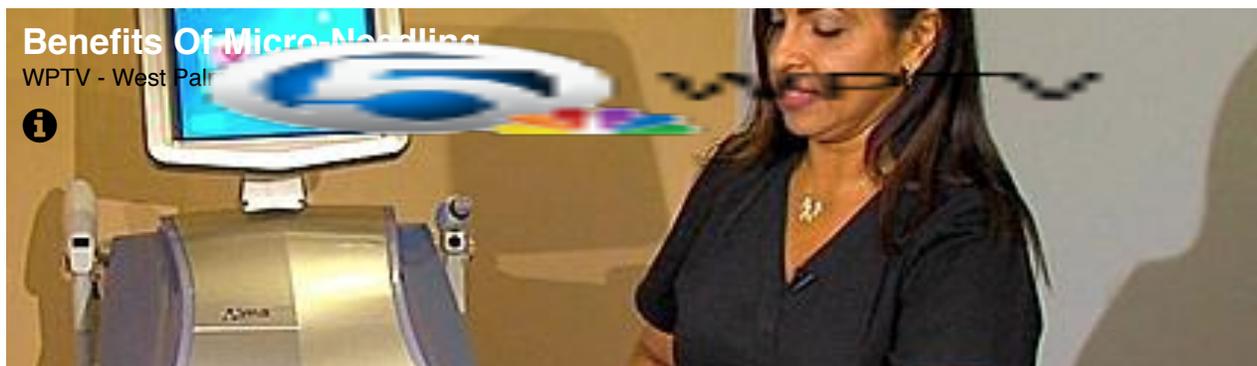


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Not to put too fine a point on it, but sometimes beauty creams don't work as well as women wish.

So when they want to fight wrinkles, diminish scars or smooth stretch marks, interested consumers may need to bring out the big guns. Or, in some cases, the tiny needles.





It might sound like torture, but micro-needling is actually a beneficial therapy to fight unsightly beauty woes on any area of the body. Consumers should know about this advance in the world of skin rejuvenation.

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“It sounds scarier than it is,” said Kristen Gilbert of Bellus Medical, the manufacturer of the leading micro-needling device, SkinPen, who obviously has a vested interest in easing any consumer concerns or worries. The treatment pokes fun at aging by relying on the body’s own natural healing reaction to work.



(http://www.lifetzette.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/SkinPen_II_online_Large-s.jpg)

Here’s how it works for anyone who might be interested (and always check first with a trusted dermatologist before undergoing this or any other skin-enhancing procedure).

Before you go under the needle, a topical numbing agent is applied to the chosen area. “I’ve heard everything from people could fall asleep to it feels like a heavy microdermabrasion,” said Gilbert of the moderate ouch-factor.

After 30 minutes, a trained expert then glides the motorized hand-held device over your skin. Twelve 32-gauge needles, ranging in length from .5 mm to 1.5 mm based on your complexion and skin thickness, punch hundreds of “micro-injuries” into your face, neck, chest, thighs – wherever you want to have smoother-looking skin.

“These micro-injuries cause a wound healing cascade,” Gilbert said of the technology. “Micro-needling is one of those most natural ways to stimulate healthy new skin. It does it in a way that creates less inflammation, but still gives you great results.”

Those results are what keep dedicated followers like Sara Lahey of Boston coming back for more. The 38-year-old vice president of operations at Bella Santa Spa in Boston and mother of a 2-year-old son was interested in smoothing out the skin tone on her face, neck and décolleté area, as well as fixing a faint, pesky scar above her brow. She’s now on her fourth micro-needling treatment.

“People who didn’t know I had the treatment done not only complimented

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me on a 'glowing' supple complexion, but also commented that my neck and décolleté looked great," she said. "It absolutely looked healthier with improved texture. Even my scar was fainter after the third treatment. I'll be having this treatment as often as they'll let me."

But it's not only a pen that does the job. Companies such as New Zealand beauty line Environ have made micro-needling rollers available for medical and at-home use. The DIY versions typically have smaller .1 mm stainless steel microneedles. The person rolls the device vertically, obliquely and horizontally over the area for approximately 3 minutes twice a week to get results.

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"We have been working with Environ's micro-needling rollers for the last five years," said Dana Chasen Thomases, master esthetician at Brad Duncan Skin Care in Boston, of this line created by Dr. Des Fernandez, a pioneer in the technique of micro-needling and home rolling. "After cleansing, exfoliating and extracting the skin, we roll across the skin in several different directions. We can roll the entire face, neck and chest area or simply roll the 'problem' spots."

After the skin has been rolled, intense serums, usually containing vitamin A and C, can be applied to that they penetrate through the injuries into the skin.

Thomases considers in-office micro-needling a wonderful alternative to collagen-inducing laser treatments that often require downtime. She said the

treatment is much safer for darker skin tones.



The pin pricks trigger three crucial stages to help skin recover from time and tragedy: Inflammation, which brings fresh blood to the surface and stimulates growth factors; proliferation, during which dermis-creating fibroblasts populate the area with new elastin and collagen; and remodeling, when the wound is replaced with new, stronger tissue.

Gilbert said that since there's no chance of the post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation normally found with other skin-smoothing treatments like intense-pulsed light or heat lasers, even people with super-sensitive skin can benefit from micro-needling.

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A sterile, individually packaged cartridge is used for individual sessions, which takes around an hour. Although there's no actual downtime, you should still reconsider day-of activities. Your skin will be puffy and sunburned red, and you can forget about working out or wearing makeup. A few days after, your skin will start to peel a little bit "due to trans-epidermal water loss (water lost from the skin) through the micro injuries created by the treatment," Gilbert said.

Although some see smoother and more refreshed skin after just a single treatment, four to six micro-needling sessions spaced four to six weeks apart are recommended.