

THE NEW FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

# Facelift Massage

*Facelift massage is a healthy and less-expensive alternative to invasive treatments like Botox, laser resurfacing, fat injections and plastic surgery—which accounts for its growing popularity in both spas and private massage practices across the United States.*

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by Kamala Thiagarajan

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**T**here are 78 million baby boomers, those people born between 1946 and 1964, in the United States, and they aren't getting any younger. The first wave of boomers began turning 60 in 2006; half of all boomers are over age 50; and about 4 million more pass the half-century mark every year.

A white paper released by The Boomer Project ([www.boomerproject.com](http://www.boomerproject.com)) notes that "Boomers have a simple goal: live longer and better. Yes, they agree it's getting

harder and harder to keep their figure or stay attractive. But that doesn't mean they are going to stop trying. If anything, they'll redouble their efforts."

The over-50 crowd isn't the only group showing increased interest in appearance: According to research published on the Web site of the American Association of Retired Persons ([www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)), "60 percent of women and 35 percent of men say they would be interested in having some procedure if it could

be done safely, for free and so no one could tell.”

What does all of this mean to massage therapists? Two words: Facelift massage.

## A new spa trend

The stress and emotional duress of our everyday lives can show up within the face's muscles and skin. As time progresses, this, coupled with each fleeting expression that crosses our features, accelerates the aging process, leaving us with fine lines, wrinkles, a sagging brow and a dull complexion.

The ancient Chinese were the first to experiment with facial-massage

spas, but I feel it is one of the hottest trends out there,” agrees Mya Bremen, a senior massage therapist at the Upledger Institute in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. “It is becoming more popular with both massage therapists and estheticians.”

Spa-massage therapist Brenda Peoples, of Jacksonville, Florida, offers just as many facelift massage treatments as she does her other services, which include Swedish, seated and pregnancy massage, LED light therapy, salt glows and body scrubs.

“Since they are sold in a series, my facelift-massage clients keep my book filled,” she says. “I work on one side of the face at a time, and after the first side

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techniques: They found that facial massage combined with acupuncture produced remarkable results in retaining youth. Today facelift massage is a well-evolved therapy comprising many different techniques.

Facelift massage involves a firming, lifting, contouring treatment that restores the skin's radiance while it tones the muscles. Indeed, its success lies in its potential to allow the client to look and feel radiant in few sittings. Because massage penetrates the deepest layers of sensitive facial skin and the underlying muscles, it increases circulation and repairs the damage wrought by pollution, stress and sunlight exposure.

Informed health- and beauty-conscious clients are seeking ways to improve their skin without aggressive medical treatments, says Nina Howard, owner of Bellanina Spa in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

“This is a relatively new procedure for

is completed, I show them the [difference] in a mirror. Most often they see a lifting, toning effect, and a softening of lines. They tell me that they can actually feel the difference.”

Another reason for the growing popularity of facelift massage is that the procedure can be easily incorporated into a private massage practice. Helen Hodgson is the owner of Serve the Goddess Mobile Spa Services in Los Angeles, California. She says facelift massage is her second-most-requested service, following only full-body massage, in her practice, where she also offers seated and Thai massage, reflexology and body scrubs “Absolutely no equipment is required,” she says, explaining the technique's ease of portability. “All of my work is mobile. I can't carry a steamer or machines that other therapists might have in a location. This technique is strictly hands-on [and therefore very convenient].”

Massage therapists in private practice generally charge \$75 to \$85 per facelift-massage session, making this massage specialty a potentially lucrative endeavor.

## Benefits of facelift massage

Client Eleanor Decker, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, has received Belaví facelift massage for 10 years. She attributes her glowing complexion to her regular treatments. “As a Spinning instructor and marathon runner, I understand the benefit of exercising muscles to keep them toned and firm,” she says. “[Facelift massage] is fabulous because of the therapeutic benefits.”

Facelift massage has proven ideal for skin that is beginning to show a loss of tone. It can iron out small wrinkles, remove puffiness and swelling, and mitigate water retention.

“It is possible (to remedy) sagging naso-labial lines, flatness in the cheek area, a flaccid jawline, in a 40-something person, in just a few treatments,” says Howard. “After six sessions, the client starts to see a contouring of the cheeks, their naso-labials are min-

imized and their jaw line is less saggy or puffy. Even furrowed brows are softened.”

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The benefits aren't all cosmetic: Facelift massage has a deeply relaxing and therapeutic effect that can counter some medical conditions. “My clients with sinus problems and TMJ-type problems also notice relief from their symptoms [after receiving face-lift massage],” says Peebles.

Indeed, a multitude of effects can be achieved from this technique. These include, says Annet King, director of training and development at the International Dermal Institute, headquartered in Canada, “improved lymph drainage, relaxed features, release of facial tension—which in turn provide a lift to the face, breakdown of constricted connective tissue to supply more glide and movement to the protein fibers, and increased circulation.”

There are many different ways to provide a facelift

## Belaví Facelift Massage

In 1987 Belle Tuckerman, founder of the Belaví Institute, created The Belaví Facelift Massage System seminar program for healing-arts professionals, such as massage therapists, estheticians and nurses, and the Belaví line of all-natural skin-care products to complement the massage. This technique is taught in the Belaví Institute in Ann Arbor, and practiced in the Bellanina Spa.

The Belaví facelift massage program involves gentle lifting (upward) strokes, tapping (tapotement), contouring (cross-fibering), acupressure and lymph



drainage. It is designed to improve the radiance of the skin while it tones muscle. Throughout the massage a range of natural ingredients from the product line is used to pamper and revitalize the face.

“Our signature product, Honeylift, is used for tapotement,” says Howard. “It is a honey-based product and has a wonderful hydrating quality to it.” “We also use an azulene-based facial massage oil, from Egyptian chamomile, which is great for

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sensitive skin,” she adds. “Another option, Beautiful Oil, is enticingly fragrant with apricot kernel oil. This places the client in an incredibly relaxed state.”

The experience is further enhanced at Bellanina with piped-in music, and warm towels to rehydrate, soothe and relax the client. The feet and hands are wrapped in hot towels, and foot-and-hand massages are also given.

While Belaví clients can see results quickly, sometimes as early as the first massage, repeated sessions are required to keep the face taut and youthful.

“Since muscles have memory, the more stimulation you give to your face, the greater the results you will have,” explains Howard. “Think of [it in terms of] going to the gym. If you work your biceps out three times a week, they will be toned. If you work them out once a week, they will tone for a day or two and go back to the way they were.”

According to the condition of his or her skin, a younger person would require between four and six treatments. Someone who has experienced severe sun exposure, or loss of collagen could need 12 to 18 sessions to reverse the damage.

## Cool Lift Face Rejuvenation

This procedure from Nature’s Stones, a stone-massage product and CEU company, utilizes cold marble stones to stimulate facial energy points to effect a temporary facelift.

The treatment improves the sluggish skin of smokers

*“The technique can be sold in packages to increase the revenue of spas and salons”*

and those with a poor diet. Lymph drainage is performed, and a gentle enzyme to exfoliate the skin and a honey mask follow. The cold stones increase circulation and reduce inflammation. The technique helps to lift and firm tired muscles, reduces dark circles and puffiness from under the eyes, and helps clear mild rosacea and mild acne.

“This [technique can] be sold in packages to increase the revenue of spas and salons,” says Patricia Mayrhofer, president of Nature’s Stones, based in Churchville, Pennsylvania.

## Indian Face Massage

Kundan Mehta, a massage therapist based in London, is the author of *The Art of Indian Face Massage*

(HarperCollins, 2001). She has been practicing bodywork for more than 10 years and has developed a facial-rejuvenation technique based on her knowledge of massage and reiki.

Mehta's technique uses light pressure in eight distinct phases, designed to lead a client into a state of total relaxation. The therapist follows a procedure to smooth fine lines, iron out wrinkles, and de-bag the under-eye area. The focus here is on firming the deep muscle as well as the underlying connective tissue.

"It's surprising that even experienced bodyworkers find the small, precise and targeted moves a challenge at first, but with practice, they soon realize just how effective this system can be," says Mehta. "Their clients' glowing complexions are visible proof of the system's success."

A unique aspect of this technique is that it does not involve the use of any oils or creams.

"[With] totally dry massage, the techniques need not be varied for oily or dry skin, but special attention is given to the client's problem areas, such as under-eye bags, smile lines, wrinkles by the eyes and frown lines on the forehead and between the eyebrows," Mehta says. "Every client receives a treatment which is tailor-made."

Usually, to see dramatic results, six to eight sessions are recommended.

## NatureSynergy Rejuvenating Facelift Massage

The NatureSynergy facelift massage has been designed specifically for massage therapists. Company founders Shelly Maguire, a personal trainer, and Frank Tedesco, a massage therapist, have a collective 30 years of experience in the spa industry.

"Facial massage is one of the most important elements of facial rejuvenation," says Tedesco. "The light and gentle touch used in our facelift massage helps to relax the muscles and release adhesions, and acts on the connective tissue to untangle and mobilize the fibers. This encourages the connective tissue to glide more smoothly over the deep layers of muscle and bone."

In this technique, focused attention is also given to the under-eye area. The eye treatment is performed by the application of an oil-free formula that is lightly massaged around the orbit of the eye and the brow bone. Next, chilled river stones are gently placed over the eyes. "This will reduce tension,

puffiness, dark circles and the appearance of fine lines," says Maguire.

The lotions used during the massage, NatureSynergy's Unique Skin Care product line, have been designed to complement the massage technique.

"We have created our technique to be effective on all skin types," says Tedesco. "This eliminates the need to treat or diagnose skin."

The client can see subtle results after the first treatment, but Maguire and Tedesco recommend a series of six or 12 weekly treatments in order to get the most benefit from the technique.

## Upledger Facelift

The Upledger Facelift incorporates Lymphatic Drainage Therapy (LDT) in addition to massage. Developed by Bremen, this facelift adds greater variety to the massage therapist's repertoire.

"LDT can provide clients with short-term, immediate benefits, such as reduced edema and improved skin tone, as well as long-term benefits that include softening of wrinkles and scars, along with enhanced skin quality that can provide a more youthful appearance," Bremen says.

Incorporating LDT into the massage-therapy session can add a new dimension to the therapeutic process—one that offers the client the welcome



## To Learn More...

- The Bellanina Institute offers onsite seminars and a home-study course in the Belavi Facelift Massage System. [www.belavi.com](http://www.belavi.com)
- Nature's Stones offers Cool Lift Face Rejuvenation workshops around the country. [www.naturestonesinc.com](http://www.naturestonesinc.com)
- The London Centre of Indian Champissage conducts training classes in Indian Face Massage. [www.faceliftmassage.com](http://www.faceliftmassage.com)
- NatureSynergy Rejuvenating Facelift Massage workshops are offered upon request. [www.naturesynergy.com](http://www.naturesynergy.com)
- Upledger Facelift massage classes are available through The Upledger Institute. [www.upledger.com](http://www.upledger.com)

benefit of facelift effects, and the therapist the advantage of a technique that is both highly effective and, because of its light touch, less tiring to apply.

“The pressure used with lymph drainage therapy is unusually light—one ounce maximum pressure per square centimeter,” Bremen says. “The application differs from other drainage practices [because] the therapist works with both hands positioned flat on the client. He or she then uses all the fingers to simulate wave-like movements. This action prompts small muscular units located along the walls of the

## Face the potential

A Botox treatment involves the injection of a purified protein, which is produced by the clostridium botulinum bacterium, into facial areas that commonly produce lines and wrinkles, especially the forehead. In the United States, the use of Botox increased by 162 percent between 2001 and 2005, with about 601,000 Botox procedures performed in 2005 alone, according to The American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

TV shows like *Extreme Makeover* aside, statistics like these show that

*“The response to the technique is often obvious after the first application”*

lymphatic channels to activate the flow of lymph.”

When performing the facelift technique, the therapist does not work on the wrinkled skin directly, but instead follows the lymphatic movement of the fluid around the wrinkle. “Since the rhythm used emulates alpha brainwaves, clients are brought into a deep state of relaxation in the process,” Bremen says.

No oils are used for this technique. “The LDT sequence for the face takes between 15 and 35 minutes to perform,” Bremen says. “It is important to follow the order as it is taught and to be watchful during the first two or three sessions for a possible detoxification reaction in the client.”

The response to the technique is often obvious after the first application, Bremen says, but ideally the client would receive two sessions a week until reaching an ideal point. Then there can be maintenance sessions once a month or every other month depending on the individual.

there is a large potential clientele ready to pay for beauty-enhancing facial treatments—and, as we’ve seen from the descriptions above, several well-established facelift-massage techniques that offer holistic alternatives to invasive procedures.

Facelift massage is an exciting treatment with the potential to reverse premature aging, breathe life into sagging skin—and augment the income of massage therapists and spas.

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