

Fountain of Youth

Increasingly Popular Facial Massage Provides Antiaging Effects

By Karrie Osborn

As a sinus/allergy sufferer, the cherry-on-top moment during my massage always comes when the therapist begins working my face. Tension dissipates quietly and without fuss from my unknowingly tight jowls. There is great sinus relief and passage opening in even the most gentle of strokes across my cheekbones. If I happen to be visiting a new massage therapist who doesn't work that final facial zone, I leave feeling a bit disappointed and undone, regardless how great the rest of the treatment went.

But facial massage is much more than just the cherry on top these days. It's a booming sector of the massage profession that has a steady flow of new entrants, and has made its way—in one form or another—into most spas around the country. Facial massage touted as an antiaging regimen with facelift effects has made even more friends amongst consumers, with new converts seeking out its benefits every day. Here's a look at some of the players in this speciality and their take on this burgeoning family of technique.



Nina Howard of Ann Arbor, Michigan, is the creator of Belavi Facelift Massage.
Belavi photos by Rick Giase.

Belavi Facelift Massage

As owner of Bellanina Institute (formerly Belavi Institute) in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and a worldwide trainer of the Belavi Facelift Massage, Nina Howard says the success of Belavi and other “antiaging” facial massage treatments has come from an audience eager for the services. “There’s a market of people who want to look better. For us, it’s primarily the baby boomers,” Howard says of the customers who frequent her Bellanina Day Spa, which holds rank as the home of the Belavi technique.

The Belavi Facelift Massage is a viable, holistic option for those who want to look their best, but don’t want to undergo the knife to do so. “We answer the needs of those clients,” Howard says.

Utilizing acupressure, lymphatic drainage, and contouring strokes, Howard says Belavi Facelift Massage softens the appearance of wrinkles, slows the formation of new ones, and helps keep facial muscles from succumbing to gravity and time. Sessions are both pampering and relaxing, even as they stave off the effects of aging.

Howard says the Belavi massage gets all the metabolic processes stimulated—facial circulation is improved, capillaries are strengthened, the facial lymph system is cleansed, and the skin becomes blemish free.

The actual protocol for Belavi Facelift Massage begins with a cleansing and exfoliating of the face, followed by an application of warm towels to gently hydrate the skin and help the client relax. Once the face is prepared, the massage begins. As part of the treatment, acupressure points are worked to release additional tension.

“Energy coagulates around a trigger point or acupressure point,” Howard says. “When you open the channels of energy, the eyes soften and lines soften.” The process releases stress held in the facial muscles and encourages the flow of oxygen to the tissues.

Part of the Belavi protocol is a “honeylift” massage element utilizing tapotement, a process that gives the skin a pinkish glow and breathing room. After the massage is complete, a chin strap is applied to support the muscles, allowing them to relax and “remember” the tightening effect. Howard says clients usually leave feeling energized and eager to rebook.

Howard suggests a twelve-session regimen for those with aging skin; clients with younger skin should see

results with six sessions. Coming in once every two to four weeks, plus massaging their face at home is the recommended protocol taught to clients.

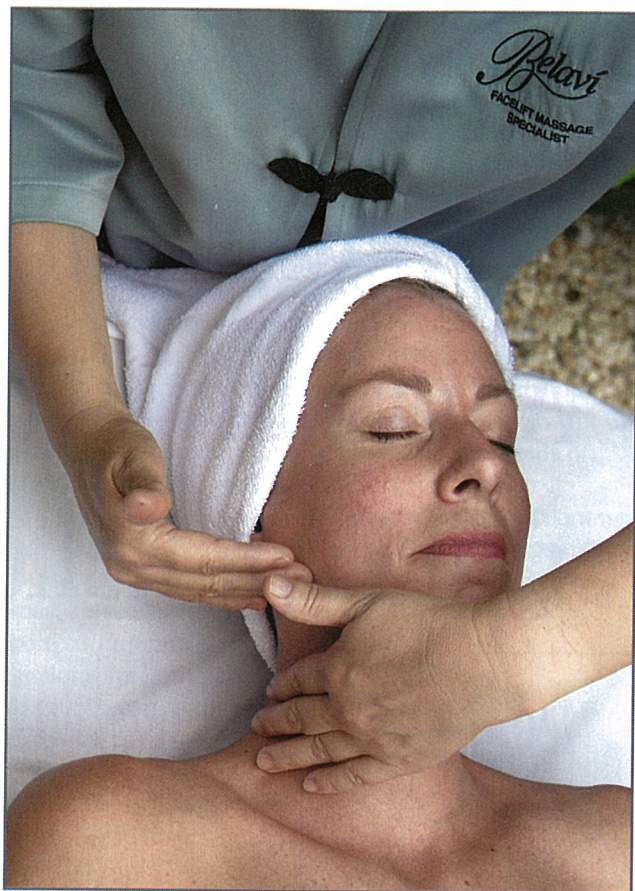
Still, twelve sessions may not be enough. For some clients, there’s just not much you can do. Howard says those with what she calls *sharpei* skin simply have too much redundant skin for the technique. “You can tone it, but it’s still going to be wrinkled,” she says.

Clients in their forties and fifties, however, can see the greatest improvements using Belavi, according to Howard. That’s the age when we get the “Howdy Doody lines” and the pouch under our jaw. It’s when sun damage has started to show and when the face flattens, losing the plump, perky cheekbones of our more youthful twenties to the effects of depleted tone and elasticity. Belavi can get in there and tighten muscles, lift cheeks, and plump up that area, Howard says.



Howard says the Belavi Facelift Massage is “the answer” for those who want to look their best, but aren’t interested in pursuing cosmetic surgery.

The multi-faceted nature of the technique is what Howard believes makes Belavi so effective. “Not only is it relaxing, it’s pampering and healing,” she says. “There are so many aspects of Belavi. If clients come in and are having issues with TMJ (temporomandibular joint) or head tension, you can give them a Belavi and all that tension will melt away. They can come in for skin rejuvenation, and Belavi hydrates the skin and makes it beautiful. Some might want to tone their facial muscles. Belavi can do that as well. There are so many ways that →



Howard says Belavi is most effective for clients who are in their forties and fifties.

a massage therapist can market Belavi massage. Not everyone wants it for antiaging.”

The self-care program for clients of Belavi is one of the things that makes it different. “We teach our clients how to massage their face at home,” Howard says. Doing that between Belavi massage treatments keeps the facial muscles in shape. “It’s very empowering to give someone a tool that will help them,” she says, and most clients still come back for full Belavi sessions, even though they have their own set of self-care tools. “Belavi has a well-rounded program because clients are not totally dependent on us.” They can continue the nurturing care at home.

Howard practices what she preaches. “I massage my face every day and I get Belavi treatments pretty often,” she says, noting that in all her seminars she teaches and with each new employee she hires, her face becomes a training ground for the fingers of the newly-learned. It’s what has helped keep the vibrant Howard looking younger than her years, and it makes her the institute’s own best advertising.

When it comes to results, Howard reminds us not to over-sell. There are still no miracle cures for aging, and without repetition, the effects of Belavi will dissipate. “If

you don’t keep it up, it won’t last,” she explains. “In order to tone and firm a muscle, you need to continue to do it.” Just like you can’t expect to go to the gym once a month and expect to be fit, Howard says you can’t do Belavi twice a year and maintain its toning effects. But following a regular treatment routine, which includes home care, can keep the face toned and more capable of fighting the inevitable.

Incorporating Belavi Facelift Massage into an established bodywork practice can be a good addition to the toolbox, Howard says. She, herself, sought out Belavi as a professional specialty after an accident left her barely able to practice the craft she loved. “I thought I was going to have to quit being an MT because I couldn’t stand there all day long.”

After learning Belavi, however, Howard found giving the treatments helped break up her day and alleviate much of her physical stress. “One of the main things it can influence is the longevity of your career,” she says.

Golden Spoons

Just what the name implies, Golden Spoons facial therapy involves two 23-carat, gold-plated spoons, one for warm and one for cold applications. The treatment, which can show firming results in minutes, utilizes the Kneipp principle of alternating cold and warm stimulus on the skin. (Father Sebastian Kneipp’s system of hydrotherapy—the Kneipp Cure—relied on cold-warm-cold stimulation, and was one of the five tenets of Kneippism.)

Owned by the Austrian Oismueller & Partner, with offices in Norcross, Georgia, Golden Spoons is being marketed to U.S. therapists and spa owners as a client add-on. Whether in a spa or home practice, those who use Golden Spoons find their clients love it.

According to Oismueller, gold has a dynamic property which “activates cells and heightens the skin’s power of resistance.” It is used as the element on the Golden Spoons because it rarely causes allergies, unlike chromium or nickel, and also has an aseptic effect. →

Books

- *Advanced Japanese Facial Massage*, by Shogo Mochizuki (Kotobuki Publications, 2004).
- *Carole Maggio Facercise: The Dynamic Muscle-Toning Program for Renewed Vitality and a More Youthful Appearance*, by Carole Maggio (Perigee Trade, 2002).
- *Ko Bi Do: Ancient Way of Beauty, Japanese Facial Massage*, by Shogo Mochizuki (Kotobuki Publications, 1999).
- *The Face Lift Massage*, by Narendra Mehta (Thorsons, 2004).
- *Timeless Face: 30 Days to a Younger You Through Face Reading, Acupressure, and Toning*, by Ellae Elinwood (St. Martin’s Griffin, 1999).

The cool spoon, filled with a biological coolant, is kept in a freezer until just before its use. The variable heat of a warm spoon is powered by 12 volts.

To begin treatment, a thorough cleansing is recommended. Then, to stimulate flaccid, tired skin, the cold treatment is initiated. A few minutes after removing the cool spoon from the freezer, its layer of frost thaws, providing a gliding film of water. Throughout the cold application, the cool spoon contracts the blood vessels and pores, promoting good circulation, decreasing congestion, and relieving pain. The cool spoon is very useful after extraction, as it decreases redness and swelling.

One of the more important functions of Golden Spoons is to make the skin susceptible to product penetration, and that's the job of the warm spoon. After its temperature is tested on the client's inner wrist and cream or lotion is applied to the face, the warm spoon creates an expansion of the blood vessels and pores, allowing products to deeply penetrate into the skin and achieve their optimum effect. The use of percussion also facilitates this process. A final application of the cool spoon rounds out the massage treatment protocol.

The reported benefits are two-fold. Using Golden Spoons triggers a nutritive blood supply to the cells and connective tissues, and a rhythmic expansion and contraction of the blood vessels results in better circulation.

Carol Venclik began using the Golden Spoons treatment about two years ago after seeing it in action during esthetic classes at the Atlanta School of Massage. "They were mostly used for calming down redness after waxing services, facials, and product penetration," says Venclik, who was later approached about developing protocols for massage therapists and estheticians to follow when using the Golden Spoons, and now trains others in the technique.

Venclik, the director of spa services at the Atlanta School of Massage, found the use of these golden tools changed her work. "As a massage therapist, I use the Golden Spoons for eye treatments and facial massage, and they can easily be incorporated in reflexology treatments. As an esthetician, I like the results



The use of cold and warm stimulation—a tenet of Kneippism—is what makes Golden Spoons a unique facial massage experience.

Photo by Rick Giase.

of using the Golden Spoons. They improve circulation, relax the facial muscles, and the warm spoons help with product penetration of serums and masks. I like the outcome of the facial treatment. It seems so complete and results-orientated. It provides a more therapeutic and deeper stress relieving benefit," Venclik says. "My client's love the way their skin feels after a session, and how wonderful the spoons feel on their skin during the massage."

For More Information

- Bellanina Institute (Belavi Facelift Massage)—www.bellanina.com
- Golden Spoons—www.oisbeauty.com
- Nature Synergy's Unique Skincare (Rejuvenating Facelift Massage)—www.naturesynergy.com
- Nature's Stones (Cool Lift Face Rejuvenation)—www.nature-stonesinc.com
- Sabrina Stevens System (StarFace Facial Yoga)—www.starface.com
- Do a Google search for "facial massage CEUs" and you'll have countless more options to explore.

NatureSynergy's Rejuvenating Facelift Massage

With forty years combined experience in the spa and bodywork field, Shelly Maguire and Frank Tedesco—owners of NatureSynergy in Naples, Florida—have recently thrown their hats into the facial massage ring with the Rejuvenating Facelift Massage. With the company's national manager, Brenda Peoples, the trio created the technique together after "a great deal of research and trials" to meet growing consumer demand.

The Rejuvenating Facelift Massage begins with cleansing, toning the face, applying a neck and shoulder massage, and energy balancing to help ground the client. Within the massage itself, treatment focuses on one side of the

face at a time, using deliberate strokes to work each area. Therapists use gentle, lifting actions as they massage, carefully coaxing the client's delicate facial skin.

"The benefits from our technique include releasing muscular adhesions and re-education of the muscles for proper positioning, as well as relief from migraines and TMJ symptoms," says Peeples, a LMT, clinically certified esthetician, and licensed cosmetologist.

The results, she says, are phenomenal. "In our continuing education classes, we show actual before and after pictures so that the participants can see real results in a variety of age groups, and in both men and women." For optimal results, it's recommended the technique, not unlike some other competitors, be sold in a series of six or twelve sessions with monthly maintenance treatments.

As for contraindications, Peeples says there are none specifically. "But if in any doubt, get a doctor's referral," she says. "I would go by all the usual contraindications for massage, with the addition of someone who has had recent plastic surgery."

Tedesco, also a LMT, says clients seeking out the treatment are mostly baby boomers interested in wellness, keeping fit, and looking younger. "People want to feel good and look more youthful, so anything antiaging is popular," he says. Couple that with a diminishing reimbursement pool for massage therapists who depend on insurance clients and you've got a lot of therapists looking for new paths. "It makes learning other techniques to add to the therapists' service menu more appealing," Tedesco says.

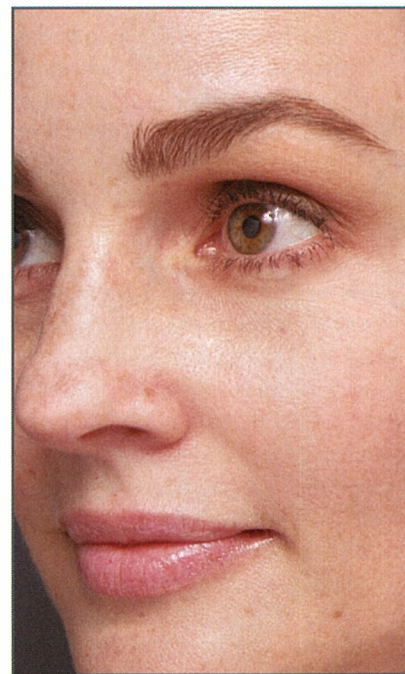
But when working with the face, specifically, what should therapists know? "Be aware of a person's boundaries, and understand their expectations and goals," says Maguire, a member of the Cosmetic Chemist's Association and a former spa owner. She believes it's important to use a professional skin care line—"not just any massage lotion or oil."

Maguire says technical expertise is important, especially when working on a client's face. "Know your clientele and whether or not this will fit into your practice, then learn a proven technique and work with a company that gives you support."

So Many More

It would be impossible to name all the various types of facial massage techniques here. We haven't even touched on the art of Japanese facial massage, or *Ko bi do*, made popular by Shogo Mochizuki, popular teacher and author of several bodywork texts. His modality seeks to do more than just touch the skin's surface, but also provides balance of the life-force energy—*ki*—creating a foundation for energetic health at all levels.

Even though it's sometimes referred to as *Botox massage*, Indian Facelift Massage also carries deep roots. Created by Kundan and Narendra Mehta, this technique



The creators of NatureSynergy's Rejuvenating Facelift Massage say the work releases muscle adhesions and reeducates muscles. The results, they report, are significant as the before and after photos of this client show after receiving three weeks of treatment. Photos courtesy of NatureSynergy.

employs ayurvedic principles, along with eastern and western massage techniques, and skin care.

And more variations are being added each day. Utilizing stones and gemstones on the face is one trend on the rise, as is the use of terms like uplifting and antiaging. As long as there's an audience that continues to demand it, there seems to be no reason we should see a slow-down of innovative, antiaging facial massage techniques coming to market. And, as your own clients hit those various milestones in life that get them thinking a bit longer about their laugh lines, consider what adding a facial massage technique might do for your own practice ... and your own longevity. **M&B**