

The BIG CHILL

Cryotherapy is coming in from the cold to become the new staple in our skincare routines. But is freezing our faces the answer to a more youthful complexion?

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There’s nothing more refreshing than the goosebump-inducing feeling of an ice cube slithering over your temples in a heatwave. As it turns out, your skincare regime can benefit from these same sub-zero temperatures. A little chill can coax slothful skin into revealing a tighter, smoother version of itself, effectively putting sagging on ice. It can give your face the type of ‘lit-from-within’ glow that normally comes with eight hours sleep and a yogic lifestyle. In fact, the next-level results – be it from a cryotherapy facial or using freeze-retaining massage tools – are so tangible, fans have dubbed it ‘frotox’.

THE POWER OF GLACIAL TEMPERATURES

For anyone not familiar with cryotherapy, it’s far from a fad. Despite recently flooding your Instagram feed, the practice originated in Japan as a remedy for arthritis before being adopted by athletes, who would strip and stand in icy temperatures for up to three minutes. Inside these whole-body cryo chambers, the air or liquid nitrogen vapor is cooled to as low as -140°C, in order to encourage wound healing and muscle regeneration. “When tissue becomes damaged it triggers an inflammatory response in the body,” explains Dr Sana Memon, a physiotherapist at Cryo, which has six cryotherapy centres across the UAE. “Ice therapy reduces inflammation, increases muscle recovery and cools the nerves, reducing pain signals to the brain.”

Given the strong interplay between regeneration and high-tech skincare, it’s no wonder cryotherapy has trickled its way into the beauty space. “I have cryotherapy every week as I believe in the mental and physical benefits,” says plastic surgeon Dr Yannis Alexandrides, who has made it central to his brand, 111Skin. “Essentially, cryotherapy biohacks your body’s thermoregulation. It incites blood vessels to constrict, which stimulates an increase in collagen production and oxygen to the skin; cells start to replenish and you feel a rush of feel-good endorphins.”

In clinic, Dr Alexandrides’ tool of choice is a wand that blows ice-cold air at -30°C across your forehead, cheeks, neck and chin. You can experience its transformational freezing effects at the Jumeirah Saadiyat Island Resort spa in Dubai. Or try 111Skin’s Sub-Zero De-Puffing Energy Facial Mask, which replicates the effects and is soaked in caffeine to encourage lymphatic drainage.

Chief among cryotherapy’s benefits are its immediate sculpting effects. Ada Ooi, facialist and founder of 001 Skincare, credits this to an uptick in circulation and the fact that muscles lose heat and tighten up. “Cryotherapy gives a cold shock to the skin’s surface, which dramatically improves blood flow to the targeted area,” she says.

“More nutrient-rich blood means toxins are flushed away and water retention is reduced, leaving skin looking plumper and more radiant within a matter of minutes. Freezing temperatures also cause muscles to temporarily contract, giving them a firmer, lifted appearance.”

DIY ‘SKIN ICING’

Of course, it’s also possible to reap the benefits of a skin icing treatment at home with the latest raft of cryotherapy-inspired tools. Facialist Angela Caglia, whose clientele includes supermodel Helena Christensen, incorporates the principles of cryotherapy into her bespoke facials by gliding a pair of cold 18K gold-plated wands over the skin after extractions or as a final step to tighten pores. Her Gold Cryo Facial Set is now available on Net-a-Porter – simply store the wands in the freezer and use in your hour of need. “The best technique is to apply serum, moisturiser or oil first, and then lightly glide the wands upwards and outwards on your face,” she says. “You can also sweep in a downward motion behind your ears. This drains any excess fluid to your lymph nodes and alleviates puffiness around the eyes.”

Likewise, Ooi’s Cryopress Ice Facial Massager sustains a temperature of -8 to 2.5°C, meaning it’s poised to deflate a 7am face puff when rolled over freshly cleansed skin, while influencer-favourite Fraîcheur Paris favours glass Ice Globes, filled with anti-freeze liquid, to awaken fatigued skin.

Then there’s the skincare that feels even more satisfying kept in the refrigerator. “Without adequate sleep, dark circles can be more prominent because the blood vessels in the lower eyelid become more dilated,” says Dr Maryam Zamani. For immediate relief, apply her MZ Skin Anti-Pollution Illuminating Eye Mask chilled to help constrict blood vessels and drain fluid build-up. Charlotte Tilbury’s Cryo-Recovery Eye Serum deposits bacteria

from a Swiss glacier via a cold metal tip. Pair with her Cryo-Recovery Mask, complete with cooling gel bead pockets, and it’s almost shocking how effective it is at lifting, brightening and de-puffing.

For the ultimate in refreshment, stick the Dr Jart+ Cryo Rubber Mask with Moisturising Hyaluronic Acid in a refrigerator for 30 minutes before use. The cold rubber, infused with hyaluronic acid, essentially ‘sets’ on the face, sealing in hydration and taking down redness. A clinical study by the brand suggested that skin temperature was temporarily reduced by around -11°C – enough to jumpstart blood flow.

Here’s to skin that’s staying cool, calm and infinitely more glowy this winter. ■

