

An Ancient Art for Ageless Skin

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For thousands of years the Chinese have used therapeutic cupping for asthma, fever, congestion and chronic or acute pain. Due to its ability to drain toxins and regulate the skin and muscles, facial cupping can be transformative to your appearance as well. Used either as a stand alone treatment, or as an addition to acupuncture facial treatment, facial cupping has benefits far beyond reducing fine lines and sagging jowls. These benefits include: increased local *qi* and blood circulation to the skin, drawing nutrients to the surface and enhancing absorption of lotions or serums. Facial cupping clears heat and serves as a method of detoxifying the skin; it also drains stagnant fluids and eases puffiness. While traditional cupping can leave marks on the skin, facial cupping does not. Acupuncture facial cupping is entirely painless and is not an irritant to the skin; it can be used on rosacea, melasma and even on sensitive skin.

The majority of the patients I see for facial cupping come to reduce the signs of aging. There are several reasons why our skin wrinkles and loses its glow over time: 1) as we age, our skin loses elements that once made it look youthful: fat, collagen and elastin. 2) glands that once helped to regulate moisture and rejuvenation of skin cells and blood flow causing dry, cracked skin begin to slow down 3) skin cells divide more slowly, causing the dermis layer to thin. One percent of collagen decreases every year. 4) fat layers beneath the dermis begin to atrophy. By increasing blood flow and circulation to the skin, cupping can help the skin to regain its youthful appearance. Cupping can be a very unique way of turning back the hands of time.

The procedure itself takes anywhere from 15 minutes to half hour to perform. I start out with needling a few body points to ground the patient and affect various skin conditions. After applying a lotion or oil, a small cup is either "parked" for a few seconds over a deep wrinkle to increase blood flow to the area, or it is moved along the face and down the neck to drain lymphatic fluid and stimulate blood flow. Cups are positioned over acupuncture points on the face for short periods of time to stimulate them as part of the overall treatment. Larger cups can be gently dragged along a meridian to activate it for lifting and firming effects as well. Small oblong cups, can be used in the eye area, for sagging eyelids, puffy under eyes, and dark circles.

Done properly, cupping therapy will bring collagen to the surface and increase blood flow, reduce puffiness, dark circles and diminish fine lines. But the benefits go beyond just cosmetic, facial cupping can be very beneficial to drain nasal sinuses and the lymphatic system. Conditions such as TMJ pressure can also be relieved. The increased local blood supply will bring nourishment to the muscles and skin and allow for toxins to be carried away via the veins and the lymphatic system. My patients describe feeling very relaxed and deep warmth, and tingling sensation long after the treatment has ended.

Although it is possible to use fire cups, I do not recommend it. The cups I use are small bulb suction

cups, they are highly polished glass, very smooth, and come in various shapes especially designed for your face. I have had students show up for class with plastic cups, and "bee sting kits" these are very irritating to the skin and I strongly discourage their use.

Facial cupping is affordable and is a wonderful add-on to an acupuncture facial treatment or can be used alone as part of a regular skin care routine. Patients can come once or twice a week until the desired results are achieved.

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