

PINS, PEELS & NEEDLES

The latest wave of wrinkle warriors doesn't come in jars. These high-tech treatments promise to wipe out smile lines, forehead folds, crow's feet and dull skin with a zap, prick or peel. But which one-hour age deactivators are worth your time and money, and at what age should you start? We've done the hard work for you.

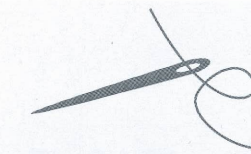
Words: Joanna Barry

SKIN NEEDLING

The cosmetic procedure involves going over the skin several times with a cylindrical derma-roller of fine needles to induce collagen growth in problem areas, improve skin texture and reduce the visibility of scars and wrinkles. The needles puncture and injure the skin to begin a process of healing followed by the production of collagen within the skin, which lasts for up to 12 months.

The procedure takes approximately 20 minutes, depending on the size of the surface area. The face is commonly treated, though

needling may be done on your hands, neck, back and chest as well. It sounds painful, but the needles are incredibly thin and recovery is faster and easier than after laser treatments. "It takes around one week for all the swelling to go down. The skin will weep, scab and then heal," explains Dr Sara Mullen from The Victorian Cosmetic Institute (thevictoriancosmeticinstitute.com.au). "After two to three weeks, skin will be looking better and will continue to improve over time as more collagen forms."



When to Start: Once someone's acne has quietened down, generally 20 years old onwards. **Downtime:** 2 days
Cost: Ranges from \$200-\$500 per session
How many treatments: Therapists recommend 4-6 treatments, 4-6 weeks apart

THERMAGE

Thermage is a non-surgical skin tightening procedure used to improve and reduce the early signs of loose or sagging skin. It uses radiofrequency energy to create a heating effect on the deep dermis. This heating stimulates collagen production and synthesis, energising skin and strengthening the muscles underneath to produce a more youthful appearance. A cooling attachment is then used to protect the skin surface from damage and burning.

Thermage can be performed on the face, eyelids, neck and hands to reduce wrinkles and lift your brows, cheeks and jaw. A quicker, more comfortable alternative to surgical treatments, it takes 15 to 30 minutes to complete and the results are impressive – most patients see significantly tauter skin within six months.



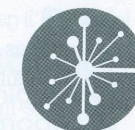
When to Start: Late 30s
Downtime: You'll experience mild redness 1-2 days after
Cost: From \$1,800
How many treatments: 4-8 treatments for best results

PELLEVE

Another alternative to laser, Pelleve uses high-frequency radiowave technology to deliver energy to the skin, much like Thermage. The main difference between the two procedures is that Pelleve purports to achieve the same tightening results without using searing temperatures. The device heats the skin to 39-41°C (as opposed to 65°C) which causes the collagen fibres in the skin to contract and tighten.

Commonly used on the face, neck and under-eye area, areas are isolated and treated with a small, handheld wand one at a time. The treatment takes between 30 minutes to an hour and doesn't require anaesthesia or skin-cooling in the aftermath. However, results aren't immediate and you may have to wait six months to see the full results.

"Pelleve can be great for decreasing lines and wrinkles – especially on the neck area; however, I usually recommend Fraxel or Revlite as they're more effective," advises Dr Mullen.



When to start: 30s-40s
Downtime: 2-4 days
Cost: Around \$300 for eyes and \$600 for full face
How many treatments: 3 sessions for best results

DERMAL FILLERS

The non-surgical treatment involves injecting dermal filler to 'fill in' problem areas. The most popular filler is a crystal-clear, biodegradable, non-animal synthetic gel made from a substance that occurs naturally in the skin. "Dermal fillers are great for adding volume to the hollows of the eyes, and to the lips, chin and cheeks," says Dr Mullen. The substance is injected into your face to make it look more hydrated,

plump and defined, reducing the appearance of sagging, wrinkles and smoker's lines.

The procedure lasts 15 to 45 minutes. Anaesthetic is used to numb the area and make the whole ordeal virtually painless. The after effects are swelling and redness and you may see needle prick marks and bruising, but this can be easily masked by make-up and will subside a few days after treatment.

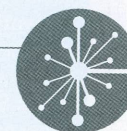


When to Start: Anytime from your mid-20s to late-70s
Downtime: Minimal
Cost: Between \$350 and \$700
How many treatments: A single treatment every 9-12 months

FRAXEL LASER RESURFACING

Fraxel. Kim Kardashian is reportedly a fan and Courtney Cox has admitted to wanting to try it. A type of laser therapy, it uses fractionated lasers to penetrate deep into layers of skin. As the body goes through its natural healing process, it works to rid itself of excess pigmentation and abnormal cells while stimulating collagen production. "Fraxel dramatically improves skin tone, texture and eliminates fine lines and wrinkles, helping make the individual more youthful," says Dr Mullen.

There are different types of treatments within the Fraxel spectrum, with greater intensity lasers used to target acne scarring, pores and deeper wrinkles. The treatment itself takes between 20 minutes to an hour and feels like a hot rubber band being flicked repeatedly against the skin. As with a peel, it looks and feels like sunburn for a few days to a week after the treatment, before the smoothing shows up. The results last a year or more until new wrinkles begin to form. It's not for everyone, though. According to Dr Mullen, patients with darker complexions may be at risk of pigmentation loss with any laser so it's essential to have your skin assessed by a doctor first.



When to Start: Late 20s
Downtime: 1-3 days
Cost: Approx. \$1,300 per session
How many treatments: 1-5 sessions, 2-6 weeks apart, depending on your skin's needs