

by Amanda
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THE SCORES of tiny needle-sharp spikes are perched on the end of what looks like a kind of surgical mini paint roller. And worst of all, I'm about to have them pushed into the soft skin of my face. All over my face.

Why? Well, because like millions of women of a certain age I am always extremely keen to make the most of my appearance and to continue to look as young as possible for as long as possible.

And if that means being subjected to lots of tiny puncture marks in my face, then so be it. Who ever said looking great would be painless?

The idea of undergoing this kind of treatment was mooted after the summer, when my skin was feeling a bit lacklustre.

In the past couple of years, I've undergone two or three non-surgical treatments to improve the appearance of my face and décolletage, and I felt it was time to try something new.

First, I tried a Broadband Light (laser), then later Microdermabrasion and a Blue Peel (which literally turned me blue and made my skin flake off in strips, so that hot dates were out of the question for at least a week).

I know it might sound daft, but as with anything in life, you have to keep working at it or end up looking like an old prune.

So when my non-invasive cosmetic specialist Lee Garrett told me Angelina Jolie had benefited from using a Derma Roller, I decided it was too intriguing a treatment to ignore.

Reading up on the procedure — it's actually been around in a much cruder form for some years — it seemed too good to be true: hardly painful (just a little 'uncomfortable'), with very little recovery time, back at work in two days, look like Angelina Jolie...it's what they call a no-brainer.

But before I try any procedure, I always want to know how long before I can go out on a date, as that's the real acid test.

So I called Lee at the Freedomhealth clinic and he explained what I'd be letting myself in for.

First, the good news. The treatment claims to 'significantly improve' the appearance of lines and wrinkles on your face and décolletage. I can definitely vouch for the effects of the face, as that's all I had done.

NOW THE science bit. Thirty minutes before the procedure, your skin is numbed with a topical anaesthetic, a bit like what a dentist uses to deaden an area before the needle is used.

The actual Derma Roller is made up of a small, solid wheel attached to a little stick that propels it backwards and forwards across your face.

The roller is covered with hundreds of minuscule 'micro-medical' needles that penetrate the skin, creating lots of tiny 'wounds'.

Your skin responds by producing extra collagen to 'heal' the punctures, and that's what plumps up the skin again and enhances the natural blood supply — so you get a natural 'glow'.

Think of the rollers that grounds-men use on bowling greens to pierce the turf after it's gone all hard in the sun, so the rain can sink in and moisten it up, and you get the picture.

Most non-surgical treatments work

on the same principle of superficially damaging or causing minor trauma to the skin, and forcing the body to heal itself to stimulate the body's natural collagen reproduction.

And as we all know, collagen is God's gift to good skin. It is destroyed by age and the sun, and naturally reduces by one per cent a year from the day you are born. Aged 50, ladies, you've lost around half of it.

The Derma Roller also tightens the skin and reduces pigmentation and sun marks.

The actual treatment involves the clinician rolling the little wheel backwards and forwards across your face in small sections — and in

fact that 'uncomfortable' promise turned out to be true. The upper lip area is the only part I found painful.

The Derma Roller was originally devised to remove deep acne scars and is brilliant for those.

It is also supposed to be an excellent treatment for stretch marks on thighs and tummies, but I can't vouch for those applications.

So you are in and out in about an hour, and afterwards it will look as though you have sunburn on your face, but it really is not painful.

Lee put some oxygen cream called Chiroxy on my face after the treatment to take the sting out and reduce the redness. By the morning, the flame-grill look is

dramatically reduced — and virtually gone by the second morning.

There was a slight peeling effect on the skin in the most badly damaged areas, but nothing like the severity of a serious chemical peel.

So, do I look like Angelina Jolie? Well, I already had the fat lips, but now my skin looks so much fresher and younger, more line free and tighter without looking taugt.

And I have discovered that there are also 'at-home' Derma Rollers you can use, which have a less dramatic effect but do brighten the skin noticeably.

But beware of the products sold online, as they are often not sterile and the metal they're made from is

not medical grade, so it can bend and tear the skin.

The homecare kits sold to patients by proper practitioners after treatment are safe, because they are of medical standard and the needles very fine — 0.02mm.

Using one of those yourself means you can perform your own top-up between clinic treatments.

The Derma Roller course takes three sessions every four to six weeks, depending on how damaged your skin is, and costs £300 per session.

Now, that's a lot of money during a recession, but let's face it, would you rather go without three leather handbags this year, or look like one?



No pain, no gain: Amanda Platell undergoes Derma Roller treatment. Inset, the result

ROLLING BACK THE YEARS

AMANDA PLATELL pins her hopes of looking younger on an agonising new beauty gadget