

# Why Med Spa Facials Are The Best Money Can Buy

Post by Stephanie Simons on September 04, 2015



Any woman worth her weight in image enhancements knows the true test of a 'before and after' is how dramatic and long-lasting the 'after' really is – and how long you can maintain it after you get home. Good luck recreating that winged eyeliner and voluminous Victoria's Secret hair at home, right?

If you're really seriously about looking like 'You 2.0' (hell, make that 'You 4.0'), forget the makeup artist beauty counter and blow dry bar. The trick is to get yourself to the spa and take home the hard-working products that will protect whatever investment you just made until your next visit.

But not just *any* spa. And certainly not just *any* products.

Skip directly to the head of the class and seek out the ones that will do the unthinkable: get you to love the way you look in the magnifying mirror. Smaller pores, finer liners, lighter age spots, a balanced and brighter complexion... yes, you *can* buy great skin.

Here's the deal – and one you won't want to forget:

Establishments touting themselves as a 'salon and spa' deliver a drive-thru-quality glow that fades around the second or third day. You'll recognize them by their menu of treatments that aim to relax and unwind, the chai-tea and the portable jet bathtub for your feet. And if you're really astute, you'll probably also notice (albeit a bit too late) that the estheticians are unskilled at, or can only use their fingers to do extractions because they're not licensed to use medical tools. At which point you'll be wondering why you didn't just stay home and attempt them yourself in front of the magnifying mirror.

A full-fledged clinic, on the other hand, aims for longer-term results and a real transformation of the skin. The menu aims to visibly correct and reverse the signs of aging and may include everything from chemical peels and microdermabrasion to targeted lasers. They have all the weaponry in their arsenal to win the war on premature aging. Plus the experience and qualifications to actual maximize said weaponry.

"A clinic is about more than just the robe and slippers," says Karen Fernandez, Lead Medical Aesthetician and Manager of Aesthetics for [SkinSpirit Skincare Clinic And Spa](#) with locations in California and Washington.

"It's about game-changing skincare. Any time you see the word 'clinic,' it's an indicator that your facial will work hard for you, either to maximize your Botox or fillers, or keep you othem for as long as possible. It means owned and operated by a medical doctor, medical practitioner or registered nurse. It means *results*."

In most clinics, even the signature facial – usually the most basic of services – goes above and beyond the call of beauty duty to visibly minimize things like acne, hyperpigmentation and fine lines. Clinics are redefining luxury. Getting one step closer to perfect skin is the ultimate indulgence, isn't it?

From now on, think of the difference between a 'salon and spa' and a 'clinic and spa' like the difference between a bank and an investment financial firm. Or between the minor leagues and the MLB. There really is no comparison, although the two often get mistaken for one another.

Clinics are worlds apart and light years ahead because they use cosmeceuticals, a fast-growing category of topical products that combine cosmetics and pharmaceuticals to deliver clinically proven results. Some of the most notable brands include [SkinMedica](#), [Jan Marini](#), [SkinCeuticals](#), [PCA](#) and [Revision](#), all of which harness the power of biologically active ingredients to produce medical or drug-like results. Used by themselves, these cosmeceuticals deliver beyond basic everyday creams and serums by traveling deeper into the skin at a cellular level, and when combined with a clinical treatment like a [chemical peel](#) or dermplaning, the combination has the



potential to make you wonder why you ever wasted your money on anything else. To put it in terms the truly beauty-obsessed will understand: a medical-grade facial does for your face what tailored clothes do for your figure, or what a great haircut does for your hair after you've overdosed on chemical treatments and sulfates. It's that *'where have you been all my life'* feeling that makes spending money both functional and worthwhile.

"Cosmeceuticals exist in the little-known space between department store brands and in-office laser treatments. They exist to enhance the skin and maintain it," adds Karen.

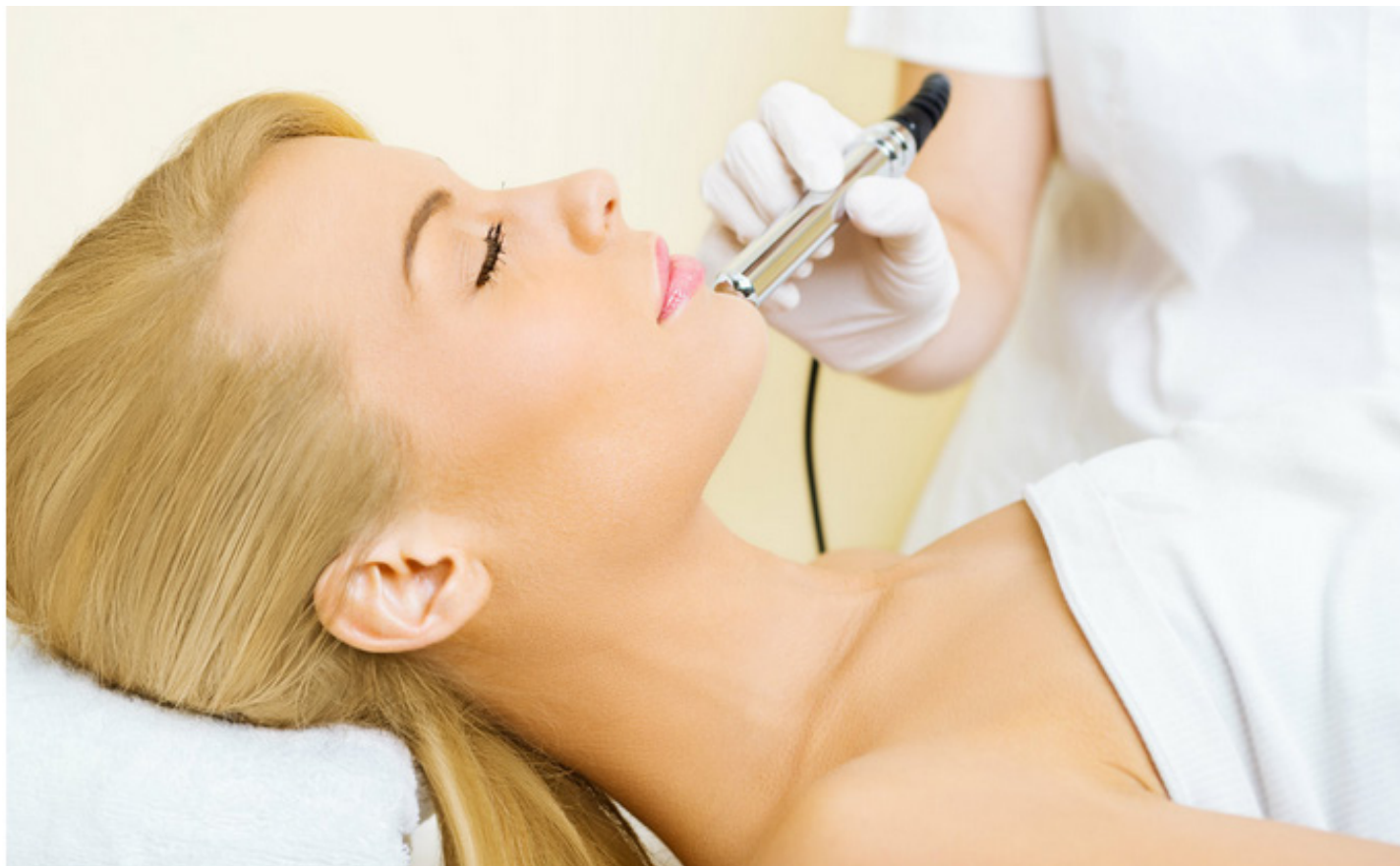
Used with 'modality' treatments like [microdermabrasion](#) and [microneedling](#) or dermaplaning, the possibilities really are ageless. These controlled wounding techniques are the secret to visibly correcting the skin and promoting a more youthful appearance, in tandem with consistent home skincare.

In other words, this is one 'before and after' where the 'after' is not only simple to maintain but offers the dramatic results you crave. If you're vigilant with your at-home skincare routine, of course...

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## Truth Serum: Is Your Facial Really Working For You?

Post by Stephanie Simons on September 18, 2015



Beer. Blue jeans. Baseball caps. I'd officially be a 'low-maintenance girl' if it weren't for my skin, which is a total diva. It's hyper-reactive, hyper-sensitive and, lately, hormonally enraged. Sometimes I wonder, if I did nothing at all to take care of it, would I look like a gremlin that lives on the bottom of the sea?

Now if you're like me, your delicate face probably has a lot of demands and some pretty sky-high standards: everything needs to be oil-free, fragrance-free, paraben-free, dermatologist-tested and non-comedogenic. When your skin's a mood-swinging product snob, this is how you'll know: it will snub any old cheap drugstore product and only respond to the finer things – in my case, clinically-proven, physician-dispensed brands that aren't so easily accessible outside of the doctor's office.

Of course, what this means is that my face has never cooperated when it comes to the average everyday spa facial. Leave my skin alone or risk it blowing up like a Michael Bay movie. Putting my face in the hands of someone else has always been a complete gamble. Sometimes I win. Sometimes I lose. Sometimes I wish I had never bothered and spent that \$150 on new shoes. I've had the so-called 'professional' kind that have left me red and welted, sometimes taking weeks to heal. *'I came in here with a minor blackhead and I'm leaving with Mount Vesuvius. Awesome.'* I've also had the weak-ass department store facials that really do nothing, and only massage creams on my face with the unsatisfying pressure of tiny bird feet. *'Well, that's 20 minutes of my life I'll never get back.'*

I was convinced a proper 'look-how-great-my-skin-looks' facial only existed in my wildest fantasies until I met Karen Fernandez, Lead Medical Aesthetician and Manager of Aesthetics for [SkinSpirit](#). Fernandez insists medical-grade facials are the best-kept, anti-aging secret most women still haven't heard of or tried yet – and they will make everyone, including your mirror, stand up and take notice of your skin the moment you leave the doors of the clinic.

"It is of utmost importance that your esthetician is a professional who's licensed to use medical-grade products," she explains. "These products contain higher levels of important active ingredients and, equally as important, do not contain filler ingredients like perfumes, colors and heavy lipids which can cause irritation and breakouts after a facial. I'm always amazed at how I can apply a mask with salicylic acid, peptides, retinol and kaolin clay and watch the skin literally calm and recover right before my eyes."

Every precious millisecond of a physician facial is devoted to getting results, glorious results: the kind you probably couldn't get from anything other than prescription drugs or years of staying out of the sun. Look for the words 'dermatologist' or 'medical spa' on the door and forget about the walk-in spas or day salons.

"Blending a deep physical exfoliation with a [chemical peel](#) and highly skilled deep extraction of impurities is what gets visible results. We call this a 'treatment' rather than a facial, however – although we do make it feel good with a bit of massage and a great ambiance, it's a roll up your sleeves and 'get it done' kind of indulgence," explains Fernandez.

Here are five more surprising facial truths I learnt during my most recent 90-minute 'medical-grade facial. (Hint: it's never a 'real facial' if it's less than 90 minutes).

1. A good facial treatment is not meant to be relaxing where you want to fall asleep. It will be customized to suit your face, no one else's. That means you won't get a menu of one-size-fits all treatments (i.e. 'the acne facial' or 'the brightening facial') that use all one brand. Instead, you should expect every concern to be addressed in one session: your acne, your fine lines, your milia, your hyperpigmentation, your bothersome whatever-it-may-be, all at once. And with consistency, your facialist will come to know you better than you know yourself, from ex-boyfriends to extractions.

2. You should never emerge from your treatment looking like a monster, unless you've had a serious chemical peel or something along those lines. If you do, there's something wrong. "So many people equate facials with redness and irritation and that's not the case anymore," Fernandez says. "With the right tools and high skill level, deep exfoliation and extractions can be performed by medical level estheticians that leave the skin happy, healthy and glowing."

3. Trained aestheticians have the tools (usually a sanitized needle) that can extract without pinching, as well as solutions that calm the skin afterward – the secret to leaving it less inflamed and ready to begin healing. I barely winced during mine (well, maybe just once), but it felt like a good kind of emotional purging, similar to a good cry without the tears and runny nose. Fernandez was as hyper-vigilant about clogged pores as I am about typos. And although certain areas of my face were more sensitive to the pricking sensation than others, I emerged unscathed and didn't need a single speck of concealer to hide the evidence. Unbelievable.

4. **Microdermabrasion** is as essential to your life as dark chocolate and fresh air. If it's not a part of your anti-aging facial, you're truly wasting your time. To really break it down for you, microdermabrasion feels like a Dyson Cyclone vacuum for the dead cells and debris that dull your skin. It's neither scary or painful, it's an oddly gratifying 'sloughing and sucking' sensation that covers every inch of skin, even your poor neglected neck (P.S. if there are any fine lines accumulating on your neck from dryness and not age, they will definitely disappear post-treatment). Microdermabrasion works by revealing a fresh new layer of skin and all-over brightness and clarity without harming or hurting it. It sweeps away hyperpigmentation as well as congested pores.

5. You should never have to live with a zit for more than a week and quick-fix injections are not the way to go. "Often an injection into the acne site causes more damage in the end from the trauma, and it doesn't always solve the problem. A proper medical grade extraction or plan of action to solve why your acne is occurring is a much better long term solution," Fernandez explains.

Good to know. Now if only I could think of a way to get all of my money back from past salon spa treatments...