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What Is a Vampire Facial? Everything to Know About the Skin Treatment

Erin Celletti | October 26, 2017

You've probably seen the photos on Instagram: A celebrity or influencer's face covered with blood splatter. No, it's not Halloween makeup — it's actually one of the latest treatment trends in skin care, also known as a "vampire facial." Celebrities, including Kim Kardashian West and Bar Refaeli, are fans of the facial, which might look quite scary in progress, but boasts big-time results.



So, what are they and how do they work, exactly? Don't let the name fool you. In fact, "It's usually done in full light of day," says Beverly Hills-based dermatologist [Ava Shamban](#). In all seriousness, the treatment is a "combination of a microdermabrasion, followed by the application of PRP (platelet-rich plasma)," says Shamban. "The PRP is derived from the serum portion of the blood, which contains platelets. The platelets contain high levels of growth factors, which, when applied to the skin, will stimulate cell turnover."

In laymen's terms: It's a facial that essentially uses, "your own blood to help promote the healthy activity of your skin cells," says Joshua Zeichner, the director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. Our skin is naturally comprised of red blood cells and serum, which contain our white blood cells and platelets.

Platelets, Zeichner explains, are rich in growth factors, which essentially act as energy boots for our skin. This helps our skin function optimally, increasing everything from collagen to elastin, while also bringing antioxidant and hydrating properties. "Platelet-rich plasma is now commonly used topically as part of a regular facial, used along with micro-needling to enhance penetration into the skin, and is even being injected into the skin in the same manner as dermal fillers," says Zeichner.

The process

Sound serious? Well, it sort of is — since the treatment begins with venipuncture (a blood draw) to obtain the blood. But, contrary to popular belief, it's relatively painless — aside from the first needle pinch.

Typically, the process includes the initial blood draw, then running the blood through a centrifuge to isolate the platelets. You'll then receive microneedling or microdermabrasion just

before your PRPs are slathered across your face. This can be accompanied with or without radio frequency, too. "It sounds gory and mysterious, but in fact, it is central to our evolving understanding of the physiology of the skin and advanced techniques with which to improve the quality of the skin," says Shamban.

As for recovery, it might take a day or two of downtime before you're ready to hit the streets. Shamban says recipients may need one or two days, depending on how aggressive the microdermabrasion was on your skin. You'll emerge from treatment a bit red, almost like a sunburn, which means post-procedure sunscreen is highly recommended. Applying makeup, though, is discouraged.

Are you a candidate?

Most likely, says Shamban. Those with "premature wrinkles, high levels of solar damage, or anyone who wants an even tone and fresher appearance to their skin," is an ideal candidate for the procedure, she says. However, Zeichner warns that if you have a history of blood diseases, including clotting or bleeding disorders, you should not seek PRP treatment.

As far as risks go, there aren't as many as you might think. In fact, Shamban explained that the only risk you really run is bruising at the time of the venipuncture. Aside from the discomfort of a blood draw and bruising from injection or microneedling, Zeichner says the vampire facial is "extremely safe, as it is your body's own blood being recycled."

How much does it cost?

Cost typically ranges, but in the dermatologist's office, a treatment will set you back around \$1,000, according to Zeichner. Though, the price will vary depending on your provider. He also notes that multiple treatments may be needed for optimal results and that treatments should be performed no more often than once per month.

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