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## Fashion & Style

# Why Your Face is Now Part of Your Workout

Skin Deep

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The fitness boom in New York pretty much ensures that, head to toe, every muscle in our bodies can be toned, stretched and massaged.

Even the face.

At Face Love Fitness in the financial district, the mission is to work face muscles the same way we do the rest of our bodies.

“Come see us once a week and in between do exercises at home,” said Rachel Lang, an aesthetician, who owns the studio with Heidi Frederick, a massage therapist. The promised result for the committed, she said, is better circulation, which will temporarily soften lines, even tone and skin that glows.

A session at Face Love Fitness may involve a massage to activate the muscles, a forehead lift to tone the eye area, chin presses with a Pilates ring that rests under the chin, cooling jade rollers and a generous spritz of an orange mist at the end.

There are gadgets to buy, like a mouth exerciser from Japan, and instruments that promise to help slim the face or sharpen the chin and jaw muscles, all with the daunting look of torture devices in a horror movie.

“We buy everything from Asia,” Ms. Lang said. Face fitness is already a big enough market in Asia that the soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo endorses an oddly shaped Japanese product that fits in the mouth and has weights on either ends. It’s called the Facial Fitness Pao; its tagline is “Shape up, Face up!”

Facial exercises and face massage are being touted by aestheticians, beauty gurus and even doctors as a vital addition to skin-care regimens to tone skin, reduce puffiness and accentuate bone structure. Dr. Michelle R. Yagoda, a plastic surgeon on the Upper East Side, often recommends exercises as an alternative, or a supplement, to more invasive procedures.

She compared face exercises to abdominal crunches. “Body muscles have to be exercised,” Dr. Yagoda said.

There’s a certain retro allure to the facial exercises, recalling something that may have appeared in the salon scene in “The Women,” circa 1939. Dr. Yagoda pulled a book from her library called “Miss Craig’s Face-Saving Exercises.” Published in 1970, it was a cultish favorite back in the day.

Dr. Yagoda’s recommended exercises include closing the eyes and looking (cross-eyed) toward the nose, then squinting — eyelids still closed — and holding for a few seconds. Another exercise involves opening the lips while clenching the teeth and pulling the corners of the mouth sideways with the index fingers to make the bottom teeth visible. This improves the tone of the mouth and chin, she said.

The biggest problem is compliance. “Two minutes every day is the minimum, and five to six minutes is ideal,” Dr. Yagoda said. “But it will feel like forever. It takes an iron will to stick to it.”

Dr. Yagoda is also an advocate of face massage to increase blood flow and, for post-op patients, lessen swelling and aid in drainage. She said it can also be beneficial at times of less bodily stress. “When you’re having a facial, the single most important part is the massage,” she said.

At CAP Beauty in the West Village, a full 20 to 30 minutes of its facials is devoted to massage. “We move in a specific sequence,” said Stephanie Lauren Brown, one of the aestheticians. “Starting with the neck, we use a sculpting and lifting technique and work our way up the chin and jaw line, focusing on the muscles we use to smile, chew and talk.

“Then we move up the face in the same lifting and sculpting way,” she said, “hitting the major lymph points in the face, the eyes and the forehead. We finish with a pretty intense lymphatic drainage technique, from the face and neck into the armpits.”

For all that, are these ministrations truly effective?

“Both face massage and facial exercises can improve circulation,” said Jessica Weiser, a dermatologist at New York Dermatology Group. “You will have more of a glow, appear more awake. The key is not overdoing it and doing it properly.

For the last 25 years, Codie Conigliaro, 71, a garden designer who lives in the Upper West Side, has been doing face exercises. “I was developing a double chin,” said Ms. Conigliaro, a patient of Dr. Yagoda’s. “I do chin, jawline and under-eye exercises. It’s not hard to remember to do them, just to find the time.”

But even face fitness has its limits. “As I have aged, my skin has lost much of its elasticity, so wrinkles occur no matter what exercises I’ve done in the past,” Ms. Conigliaro said.

“Stronger measures have been required,” she said.