

FEB 23

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Strengthen and tone for younger looking skin

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How fit is *your* *face?*

Victoria Stokes finds out how facial exercises can lift, tone and refresh your look



How many times a week do you work out? Many of us prioritise toning our muscles, improving our stamina, and getting our heart up on a regular basis, but have you ever considered exercising your face? While body-based strength and conditioning is all about heavy lifts, raises, and bodyweight exercises, facial fitness involves moving your facial muscles in firming motions to improve their strength. Think: making an oval movement with your mouth to create chiselled cheekbones or lifting your head to the ceiling to tone your neck. With enough repetition, these firming movements can support your creams and lotions in giving you a younger, clearer, and brighter complexion. No gym leggings necessary.

HOW DO FACIAL EXERCISES WORK?

"Facial exercises can help to strengthen sagging muscles, soften facial lines and wrinkles and improve the tone and elasticity of your skin," says Spirithoula Koukoulifikis, senior medical aesthetician at Skinfluencer London (skin-fluencer.com). "Basically, they firm up the muscles that support the skin so that it looks more toned and lifted." What's more, they can boost collagen and elastin production too; two vital compounds that give your skin its youthful appearance. And that's not all. Anti-ageing aside, facial exercises can stimulate the lymphatic system which helps flush out toxins, dirt and bacteria, revealing a clearer, more radiant complexion.

While there isn't a whole lot of research on facial fitness, Dina El Adlani, founder of ESPÉRER Skin Care (espererskincare.com), says some studies suggest that regular facial exercise may strengthen the muscles below the skin and could even help with gravity-related fat redistribution. How? "Facial exercises work through making repetitive motions and expressions that activate and build muscles in the face and neck," she explains.

It's similar to the way our bodies respond when we lift weights. "Facial fitness could be described as resistance training for the face. By strengthening the facial muscles you're effectively lifting the face and reducing sagging," Dina says.

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HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO SEE RESULTS?

Sold on the benefits and wondering how it's done? Good news: you can get a great facial workout in 30 minutes and you can expect to see results in as little as two months – though don't be surprised if it takes a little longer.

Just like you wouldn't expect to go from gym newbie to seasoned body builder in just a few weeks, toning your face takes time and the trick is to be consistent.

Dina points to a 2018 study carried out at the University of Northwestern that found participants had noticeably firmer skin after 20 weeks of daily facial exercise.

Are you wondering how you'll look after strengthening those facial muscles? It's important to manage your expectations. Results will depend on loads of different factors like your lifestyle, your current skincare regime, and even your genetics. It's likely you'll see only a subtle improvement to begin with, though Dina says results can be more dramatic over time.

Oh, and don't forget: facial exercises shouldn't replace your skincare routine. Rather they are there to complement it. "Most experts agree that a facial muscle exercise regime alone isn't enough when it comes to anti-ageing," Spirithoula points out. "Facial fitness should be supplementary to a professionally-recommended skincare regime that comprises medical-grade products and clinical treatments."

Finally, make sure to follow your facial fitness routine with good skin habits. "After the daily exercises it's a good idea to cleanse the face and drink plenty of water," says Dina. "This helps flush out toxins and encourages a healthy complexion."

Ready to give your skin a boost with facial fitness? Give the below toning techniques a try. Consider combining them with one of your other daily habits, like showering or watching the TV, if you reckon you'll struggle to fit them into your schedule. **H•W**

FACIAL EXERCISES

THE FOREHEAD FIRMER

Want to fend off forehead lines? Dina says try this...

1. Frown bringing the eyebrows together
2. Hold for two seconds, release
3. Lift your eyebrows as high as possible and open your eyes wide
4. Hold for two seconds, release
5. Repeat

THE CHEEKBONE LIFT

Spirithoula says that this is a perfect toning exercise for anyone who wants defined cheekbones...

1. Place your forefinger and middle

fingers together on your cheekbones

2. Gently pull your skin upwards
3. Open your mouth to form oval until you can feel resistance in your cheek muscles
4. Hold it for five seconds
5. Relax and repeat five times

THE JAW FLEX

Try this for a chiselled, toned jawline, Spirithoula suggests...

1. Tilt your head back until you can see the ceiling
2. Lift your lower lip over your upper lip as much as possible
3. While doing the second step, you

TO TRY AT HOME

should feel the jaw muscles near your ear

4. Rest in this position for 10 seconds
5. Release and repeat 12-15 times

THE NECK TONER

Dina recommends this exercise for a taught and toned neck...

1. Place two fingers on each of your collar bone
2. Lift your head up until you stretch your neck
3. Open and close your mouth
4. Complete this movement for around 10 seconds
5. Relax for 10 seconds
6. Repeat

THE EYE OPENER

Want to reduce signs of ageing around the eyes? Dina says this is the one for you...

1. Place two fingers on both your temples and gently press as you open and close your eyes rapidly
2. Complete this movement for 10 seconds
3. Sit up, close your eyes, and look up and down without opening your eyelids
4. Complete this movement for 10 seconds
5. Place two fingers on both your temples and slightly lift the temples as you look down. Close and open your eyes firmly
6. Complete this movement for 10 seconds
7. Repeat

