

Dr.Mohan Thomas - Cosmetic Surgeon

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Truth behind facials

[Parul Khanna](#), Hindustan Times

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It's well known that we have a fondness for gold – and for other precious metals and gems like silver, pearls and diamonds. So the idea of using such exotic substances in face creams, facials and other skincare products is tempting for many women. But though gold and silver look good as jewellery, do they help our skin to glow as well?

Sadly, the answer, according to the experts, is no. Such fancy products and facials are a great marketing gimmick, but nothing more, says Dr Mukesh Girdhar, senior consultant dermatologist, Max Healthcare, Delhi.

“The molecules of all these gems and precious metals are too large to be absorbed by the skin and benefit it in any way,” he adds. A recent article in the New York Times quoted dermatologists debunking the claim that such facials can enhance the skin.

So if there is no scientific evidence for the benefits of such exotic substances, why are companies promoting them? According to Dr Mohan Thomas, senior cosmetic surgeon, Breach Candy Hospital, Mumbai, “Cosmeceutical (products that possess dermatological and pharmaceutical properties) companies, unlike pharmaceuticals, do not have to undergo three or four stages of studies to get a license. They can simply claim to have done some research and then market and sell such products.”

Both doctors add that these precious metals and substances do not have any positive effect on the skin. “If you have had such a facial, the improvement in your skin is perhaps more the result of the massage you received, or the other ingredients used in the facial, rather than the gold or silver used,” says Dr Thomas.



Adds Dr Sanjeev Gulati, senior consultant dermatologist, Fortis La Femme, Delhi, “There is no way that your face will shine

like a diamond post a diamond facial." We look at four precious substances and the claims made on their behalf regarding their cosmetic benefits.

Silver facial

A silver facial helps in skin detoxification and purification, claims the cosmetic industry. It helps prevent blackheads too. Skin clinics also claim that silver works best on dehydrated skin by restoring lost nourishment.

Myth busted: Traditional Indian medicine says that silver does have a few healing properties, but, as Dr Sanjeev Gulati points out, "Even then, it was used as a medicine and not for any cosmetic purpose."

Gold facial

Gold facials have now become fairly ubiquitous in high-end salons. They are said to give the skin a radiant lustre. The gold in the products is said to retain moisture in the skin, increase flexibility and smoothness, slow down collagen depletion and prevent sagging skin. Gold facials also apparently improve lymphatic drainage (a network of veins in the body that removes toxins) and regenerate skin cells. Also, they are said to fight damaging free radicals and prevent premature ageing.

Myth busted: According to Dr Sanjeev Gulati, "When gold is massaged on the face, or a face pack is applied, the face does look better by 30 per cent or so, but this is all temporary and could be due to the massage the client receives."

The second claim that gold reduces fine lines and wrinkles is false, claim experts. Dr Mohan Thomas, senior cosmetic surgeon, Breach Candy Hospital, says that gold doesn't have a role to play in either lymphatic drainage or collagen regeneration. "It has been shown that massage aids lymphatic drainage in cases of women with breast cancer. Massaging any part of the body might improve the drainage to a degree, but it doesn't lead to a delay in the ageing process." He adds, "After spending Rs 1,000, any change you notice might be the result of a feel-good factor."

Pearl facial

Pearl creams, masks and packs are supposed to polish the skin so that it becomes as smooth and shiny as a pearl.

Myth busted: Dr Gulati says that he is not aware of any scientific evidence establishing that pearl benefits the skin in any way.

Diamond facial

Cosmetic companies and skin clinics say diamond facials aid lymphatic drainage without abrasion and hydrate the skin. They also claim that results are visible after a single session.

Such experts say that a real diamond works with the natural contours of the face and is useful for difficult procedures which require intensive treatment such as mild scarring, skin polishing and exfoliation. It helps those who have an uneven skin tone, aids in scar reduction, tackles enlarged pores and reduces fine lines.

Myth busted: Doctors deny that diamonds hydrate the skin or benefit it in any way. Dr Mukesh Girdhar, senior consultant dermatologist, Max Healthcare, says that diamond is a cutting agent and the only area where it may play a role is in microdermabrasion. "Even for that, we use other products like aluminum hydroxide crystals. It's not that doing microdermabrasion with diamonds will make your skin shine like a diamond," he states.

Look in your kitchen cupboard for natural cures

Homemade remedies can work wonders on your skin, and yes, this is scientifically proven

Milk: This is a good cleanser; the lactic acid present in milk causes dead skin layers to peel off, says Dr Mukesh Girdhar.

Gram flour: Has been proven to be a great exfoliating agent, says Dr Sanjeev Gulati of Fortis La Femme, Delhi.

Pomegranate: Is a bleaching agent and also contains antioxidants, says Mohan Thomas, senior cosmetic surgeon, Breach Candy Hospital.

Turmeric: Lightens skin colour. It also contains a chemical that cleanses the skin, says Dr Thomas.

Cucumber: Removes bags under the eyes by sucking out excess water, says Dr Gulati.

Multani mitti: Has granules that exfoliate the skin. It also soothes the skin, says Dr Tanvi Pal, dermatologist, BL Kapur Memorial Hospital.

Orange: Has vitamin C, which decreases marks on the face and pigmentation. "It also has anti-ageing properties," says Dr Tanvi Pal.

Tomato: Dr Pal says that tomato lightens the skin and is used for anti-tanning. "Both tomato and cucumber have tetrahydrocortisol, which inhibits melanin secretion and decreases pigmentation. Also, it has vitamin C, which lightens marks on the face as well as tackles pigmentation."

Celeb Speak

Gautami Kapoor, TV Actress

I got a gold facial done when I got married and was happy with it. I am a great believer in facials and get one done every two months. For some years, I have been hooked to pearl facials. My skin is sensitive, but this is one treatment that suits me. The pearl facial makes my skin look clean and even-toned. It is meant for whitening, so I do it when I have a tan. I am tempted to try out diamond facials too. My husband doesn't believe in these treatments, but I am a convert.

Divya Gurwara, CEO Bridal Asia

I get a facial done once in six months. I don't feel like trying out any of these fancy facials. I believe in a normal facial because it cleans the face. I also try home remedies like tomato juice, multani mitti and milk because they are easily accessible. Also, they have no side effects.

Gurdeep Kohli, TV Actress

For me, facials are an indulgence. I don't believe they do much, especially these fancy gem ones. Thankfully, I am blessed with good skin. I pampered myself with a facial when I got married, but don't do anything now. I do yoga, drink lots of water and cleanse and moisturise my face regularly. That works wonders. In fact, homemade remedies are great. For tanning, I apply tomato juice; for acne, I apply fresh coriander juice (grind coriander leaves and mix with water) and I mix oats and milk and use it as a scrub.

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