



# THE FIRST TIMER'S GUIDE

From squeezing to freezing and peeling to wheeling, 10 brave ELLE editors take the plunge and try something new. Here, we tell all: how it feels, what it costs, and whether it's truly worth it

## KOREAN SCRUBDOWN NAKED SPA

**WHAT IT IS:** A Korean body scrub, or *seshin*, is the full-body answer to our ongoing lust for all things K-beauty. While *jimjilbangs*—spas replete with steam rooms, saunas, and mineral-water hot baths—have been around for centuries, their popularity has soared here in the last few years, and the oft-included no-frills scrub is the ultimate exfoliating treatment.

**COST:** \$95 for a half hour.

**WHAT I EXPECTED:** SpaCastle Premier—the New York iteration of a Korean bathhouse—had a few more bells and whistles than the typical

spa in, say, Seoul. But in one important capacity, it stayed true to tradition: In areas like the gender-segregated baths and steam rooms, clothing is not optional—it's prohibited. While this requirement caused me anxiety leading up to my visit, within minutes of disrobing, I felt more liberated than self-conscious. Thus when I was informed that the *seshin* was also a totally nude experience, I didn't contemplate the mechanics; I just swaddled myself in my small towel and followed the spa attendant's prescrub directions.

**WHAT IT'S ACTUALLY LIKE:** After another half hour spent soaking and steaming, I was retrieved by a middle-aged woman outfitted in a sporty black underwear-and-bra set (the traditional garb, it turns out, of the *ddemiri*, or scrubbing ladies). She led me into a secluded but notably door-free nook with a vinyl-top massage table inside. I barely had time to take in the hose-fed, water-filled plastic barrel in the corner or the industrial-size pump-top liquid-soap containers before the woman had whisked away my towel. I lay on the slick table, face up, promptly relieved of my vision by means of a washcloth draped over my eyes. I looked, I imagine, like a cadaver prepared for autopsy.

With vigor, the woman began attacking my shins using what felt like coarse sandpaper (I later learned she was using viscose exfoliating mitts), methodically working over my thighs, down to my feet, across my stomach. While my steams and soaks had left me feeling pleasantly out-of-body, let me tell you: There's nothing like a bombastic rubdown from a lingerie-clad lady to snap you into a state of hyperconsciousness. I have never been more aware of how much skin covers a human body.

For the next 30 minutes, my *ddemiri* guided me through a variety of compromising poses favored by nineteenth-century painters of the female form—on my side with one knee bent; on my back, one hand propped behind my head. As I changed positions, I caught sight of my newly pink limbs covered in what can only be described as small gray rolls of dead skin, which was at once unnerving and oddly satisfying.

Once thoroughly sloughed, I was sloshed with soap and water, shampooed, and given a hearty head massage. And then it was done. **RESULTS:** My skin had never felt softer, my body never so wonderfully like a boiled noodle. So enamored was I of the feeling that, once home, I promptly ordered my own set of traditional scrubbing mitts, aka Korean Italy Towels. (Go Amazon!) With the aid of simple bar soap and a 30-minute soak in a hot bath to prep, it turns out that it's easy to MacGyver the spa experience at home. And you'll want to. Trust me.—*Keziah Weir*

WHIP MY HAIR  
PERM

**WHAT IT IS:** A body wave—a milder, gentler version of the '80s perm—that creates undone, loose waves via chemical treatment.

**COST:** \$400 to \$600 for a full head.

**WHAT I EXPECTED:** In the doldrums of midwinter, I wanted a change that could take me mentally where my bank account could not: The Amalfi Coast! The Mediterranean! Anywhere warm! Hence I found myself at Oscar Blandi salon, armed with photos of Grecian-goddess waves—hello, Amanda Seyfried in *Mamma Mia!*—and prepping for my first-ever perm. To be clear, I know nothing about hair care. I've never owned a blow-dryer, I get the same three-inch trim every time, and my stubborn, pin-straight hair has never successfully held a curl. Consider me an unprepared, overly eager Olivia Newton-John.

## DISGUSTINGLY GREAT PEEL

## BABY FOOT

**WHAT IT IS:** Launched in Japan in 1997, it's a prepackaged peel designed to take your feet back decades; you don plastic booties that contain a potent mix of fruit, lactic, glycolic, and salicylic acids to exfoliate the rough top layer of skin.

**COST:** \$20. **WHAT I EXPECTED:** When I Googled "Baby Foot," which I'd heard about in passing in ELLE's beauty closet, I pictured tiny Air Jordans. So it was a surprise when the image search instead revealed peeling feet. **WHAT IT'S ACTUALLY LIKE:** I ordered a box from Amazon, and sat for an hour wearing two plastic bags filled with a clear, gel-like serum while watching Netflix. Then I rinsed my feet in the tub. **THE RESULTS:** You aren't supposed to see the magic for couple of days, and I didn't. And then came day three: My skin puckered. It separated so much that merely walking caused sheets of calloused skin to fall away with every step. After seven days, my feet had never felt so smooth. Baby, would I do it again!—Ali Finney

I unloaded my laundry list of questions to Mairead Gallagher, the salon's resident perm expert. Do I need a different shampoo? I attach the recommended diffuser where? Can I bid adieu to flyaways and frizz? Gallagher brought me back to earth, eyeing my head. "It's still your hair. You'll have to maintain it like you normally do."

**WHAT IT'S ACTUALLY LIKE:** After wrapping my hair in varying-sized rods and circling my hairline in cotton coils, Gallagher applied the chemicals, then a double layer of shower caps, and set me under a heat lamp for 12 minutes. (In the bad old days of permology, you'd have to cook for an hour.) After a quick rinsing process to remove the perm lotion from the hair and close the hair cuticles, my curls were locked in.

**THE RESULTS:** Long waves, falling gently (gracefully, even!) from my roots to my shoulders. I spent the rest of that weekend in a chemical-induced bliss: practicing dramatic princess hair flips (easier said than

done); stopping, incredulous, to admire my tresses in the reflections of windows; and overanalyzing strangers' appraisals. Pungent chemical smell aside, this was perfect (until a week-long neck rash appeared—par for the course for my allergy-prone skin—but "Sandy, Sandy, beauty is pain").

Gallagher predicts the body wave will hold for three to four months, and after that, the curls will gradually begin to loosen, retaining some wave for upwards of a year. I'm currently three weeks out and constantly amused by my brand-new bounciness. While it was naïve to think I'd give more time and energy to hair care—I'm still air-drying my hair sans products every morning—I'm tickled to show off the new do. And come June, when my hair's longer and the curls begin to relax, I'll be primed for those summer nights.—Brianna Kovan

REINCARNATE AS FIT  
SOULCYCLE

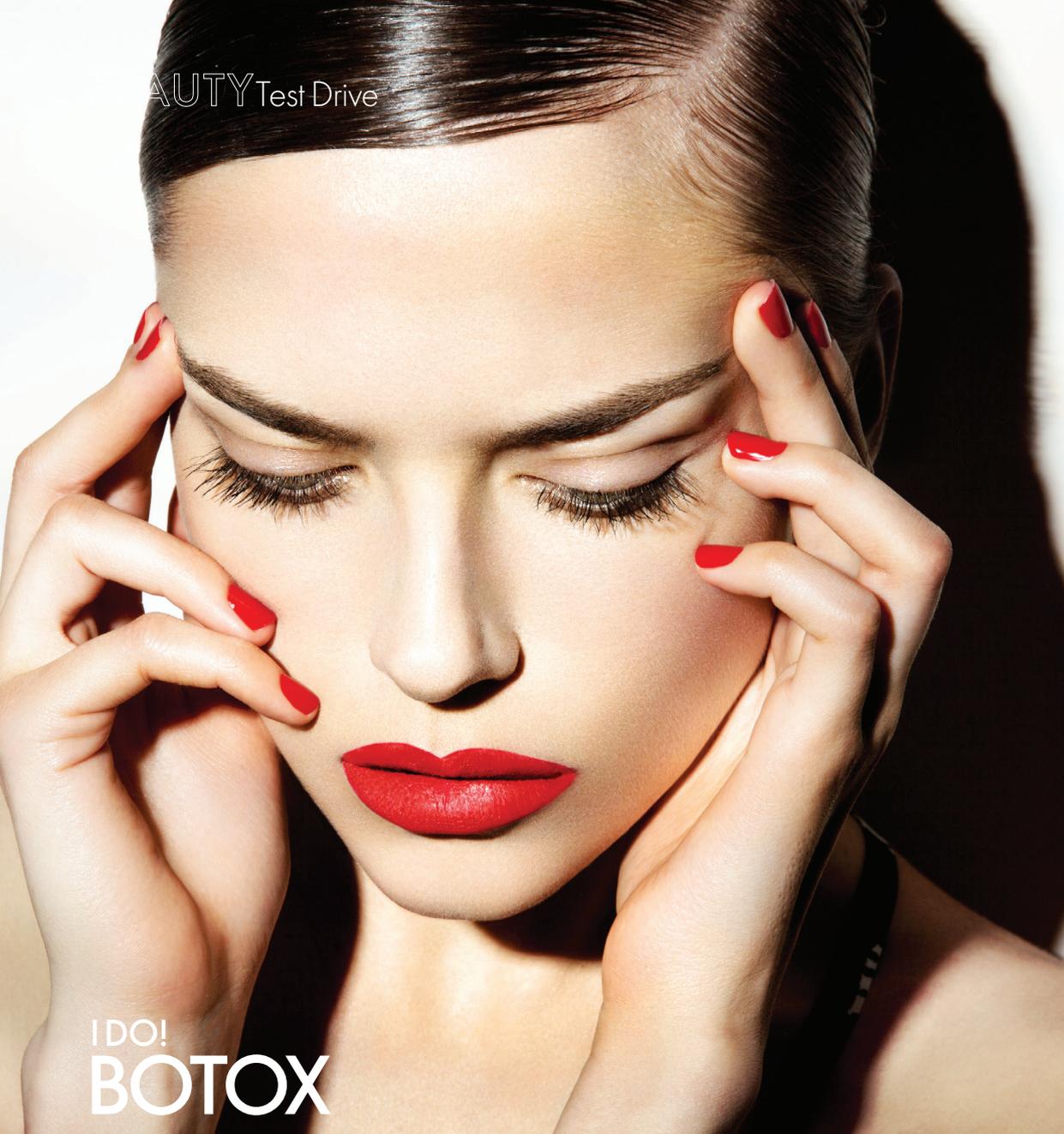
**WHAT IT IS:** The spin class-meets-nightclub-meets-religious experience that's swept the fitness set (i.e., not me) since kicking off in NYC a decade ago.

**COST:** \$34, and my dignity.

**WHAT I EXPECTED:** I like the prospect of burning a promised 500 to 700 calories in a 45-minute class, but the prospect of trying to keep up with a room full of type-A pedalers has long filled me with dread.

**WHAT IT'S ACTUALLY LIKE:** The special SoulCycle shoes I was handed upon checking in (if you don't own them, you rent them) were wet with a stranger's foot sweat, and I couldn't figure out how to clip them onto the pedals. Thankfully, a staff member helped me, adjusted my seat to the correct height, and showed me how to toggle the bicycle's resistance (by turning a knob between my knees; I feared I'd lose control if my wheels gained too much momentum, so I set it superhigh). With the room so hot I thought I'd chanced into an experimental Soul/Bikram session, the lights went out, the music went up, and everyone else's legs sped into a blur. I was prepared to hear shouted come-to-fitness-Jesus affirmations from the instructor, but I couldn't hear anything (not even the internal voice telling me to unshackle my feet and run away) except the thrilling, bass-heavy juggernaut of sound coming from the speaker behind my head. Yet the sensory overload was hypnotic, and by the time we were lifting hand weights and doing push-ups on the handlebars, I was having fun.

**THE RESULTS:** I felt radiant and energized despite smelling like an armpit from head to toe; I finally understood why people get addicted. In my midclass delirium, the Buddhist implications of the name hit me, and should my soul be cycled, I might like to return as one of SoulCycle's ultratoned, high-energy acolytes. In my present life, however, I'd still rather just go for a slow coast around the park.—April Long



I DO!  
BOTOX

**WHAT IT IS:** Botulinum toxin type A, the popular neurotoxin that, when injected in the face, will reduce muscle movement and improve the appearance of wrinkles.

**COST:** \$500 to \$2,500, depending on how many areas are treated.

**WHAT I EXPECTED:** My face and I are expressive. Like, borderline Ace Ventura. Emoting is kind of our thing. Whether or not I'm in an actual gym-going phase, my eyebrows are always getting a workout, with my signature move being a dramatic left brow raise. But wearing my feelings on my face for 31 years has earned me nearly a dozen horizontal lines on my forehead, which makes me look several years older than I actually am. A few shots of botulinum toxin will chill out the muscles underneath those rows and make me look my age again, I hope...or possibly like a frozen-faced middle-aged circus act. No matter the result, I vow to try it just this once.

**WHAT IT'S ACTUALLY LIKE:** Dermatologist Robert Anolik, MD, agrees with my assessment that I am indeed extremely expressive and that Botox could refresh my look. The forehead lines, however, are not his main concern. "You're definitely developing some creases at the corners of your eyes, and you're definitely getting some creases right between the eyebrows," he says. "The deep lines in those areas will make you look older or more tired or stressed. It's nice to soften the forehead lines if we can effectively, and we often can. But you just don't want to freeze those entirely, because then you'll look completely artificial. I want you to be able to look in the mirror and still be able to raise your eyebrows." I hadn't realized that I was in the early stages of carving out a coin slot between my eyebrows, but I suppose this is the time to go the preventive route. Give me the whole enchilada, please, I tell him.

I decline the numbing agent, both in the interest of time and because I want to know what it feels like to have toxins funneled into your face via a tiny needle. But the actual injections, of which there seem to be about two dozen across my various target zones, are—gloriously—underwhelming. Each prick feels about as painful as an eyebrow tweeze. As Anolik shoots up my problem areas, he explains the mechanics of Botox: that I could have some minor bruising; that I shouldn't exercise, bend over, or lie down for the next four hours; that it will kick in in about a week; and that it will last three to four months.

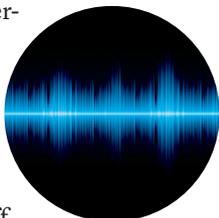
**THE RESULTS:** Five days later, I can hardly frown, and I love it. As Anolik promised, I can move my brows up and down, but bringing them together in a frown is all but impossible—when I try, I kind of rear back, mustering all the forehead power I can, only to show a few minor bumps. My forehead is now the land of the smooth. And because I look well-rested, I look younger and generally serene. Though I am sure the outcome appears as natural as it is gorgeous, I'm so amazed and excited by it all that I don't let anyone I know come to this conclusion themselves: To everyone who will listen, I am compelled to reveal my not-so-secret secret

key to the fountain of youth. "Have I told you? I got Botox! I love it!" These people all nicely tell me that I look great but not so different. Some, likely out of misplaced politeness, tell me I look exactly the same—though I know they are lying and/or just not very observant. About a month into Project Botox, I plop into the chair of my hair colorist, Greg, on a Friday evening. "Well, I see we've gotten Botox, haven't we," he declares matter-of-factly. How can he tell?! He looks at faces all day, he explains. "Well, it's really good Botox, don't you think?" I say, feeling defensive. Sure, he agrees, but to his highly trained eye it still looks like Botox. For about 12 hours after the appointment, I vow to stick to my pledge of only trying Botox once, at least until I'm older. Then, the next morning, my boyfriend proposes and I say yes—we're engaged! By Sunday, I am planning a wedding. And on Monday, I'm dialing up Dr. Anolik.—*Rachel Baker*

THE NEEDLE-LESS LIFT

# ULTHERAPY

**WHAT IT IS:** Ultherapy uses therapeutic ultrasound to inflict thermal injury up to 4.5 millimeters deep in the skin of the face, neck, and décolleté to stimulate collagen production, which tapers off as you get older. If your skin is sagging, this “resets the clock without surgery; it’s the Holy Grail,” says William Kestin, MD, the New York City doctor who performed this procedure on me. Increased collagen causes the skin to tighten, plump, and lift itself back to elasticity levels from some era in your younger past. Time to full effect? Three to six months, Kestin says. “You’ll wake up one morning and, Wow!”



While the “Hollywood people” do it yearly, he says, the rest of us less-financially-blessed mortals can get away with waiting 18 months to two years between treatments.

**COST:** From \$500 for the upper lip to \$5,000 for the face and neck.

**WHAT I EXPECTED:** Because I trust Kestin—he’s been called “The Wizard of Eyes” by ELLE Beauty Adventuress Holly Millea; and of several doctors I’ve visited for cosmetic dermatology over the years, he’s done the best work, filler-and Botox-wise, on me—what I expected was what he told me to expect.

**WHAT IT’S ACTUALLY LIKE:** It hurt like *hell* (as Kestin told me it would) when he ran the transducer, the wand through which the ultrasound is directed at 1.5-, 3-, and 4.5-millimeter depths, around my jawline and over the jowly parts of my face. Jowls are my family inheritance, alas. The procedure took about an hour, and even though I’d gotten my hands on a Percocet beforehand...did I mention that it hurt?

**THE RESULTS:** In the immediate aftermath, my face was a touch flushed and swollen; I looked like I’d just worked out. For two weeks my jawbone ached. And then: no discernible change in my face. I was a little sad at one month, two months, thinking, Holy Grail, Holy Shmail. But one day about three-and-a-half months in, people began to be shocked when I told them I was 51. I had a jawline. No jowls. It really did happen almost overnight.

One piece of advice: All practitioners of Ulthera (that’s the brand name for the equipment and procedure used most commonly) are not equal. “Don’t do ultherapy on a Groupon,” Kestin says. If your doctor has



THE DEEP CLEAN

# FACIAL

**WHAT IT IS:** Elements of a basic facial—the cleansing, masking, massage—can be re-created at home. But extractions, in which the aesthetician gently manipulates the pores to remove clogs, should be left to the pros. **COST:** \$150 for a one-hour True Facial at Exhale Spa with superstar facialist Autumn Henry, a favorite of ELLE’s most radiant editors.

**WHAT I EXPECTED:** As a facial virgin, I imagined I’d lie on a table with a towel on my head and cucumber slices over my eyes as green mud hardened on my cheeks and forehead. **WHAT IT’S ACTUALLY LIKE:** Henry layered on, then removed, cleansing balms, exfoliating peels, and rich moisturizers, massaging pressure points (under the eyebrow, along the jawline) as she went. The extractions weren’t uncomfortable: Each squeeze was like being pinched by a small child. **THE RESULTS:** My skin felt amazingly refreshed, the dermatological equivalent of the deep-clean feeling you have after a trip to the dentist. Henry’s parting advice: I should choose a simple cleanser (her favorites are from iS Clinical, Sircuit, and Tata Harper) every night to safeguard my clean slate against sooty city air.—Noah Silverstein

been to an Ulthera “advanced users meeting,” that’s a good sign. Ophthalmology, plastic surgery, dermatology, and ear, nose, and throat specialists will have had the best training to understand the structures of the

nerves, fat, bone, and tissue in the face, and thus how to wield the transducer.

Last month, I went back to Kestin and got ultherapy around my eyes, forehead, and upper lip. That hurt even more!—Lisa Chase

Monika Robl/Trunk Archive; inset: Hong Li/Getty Images

## THE BIG FREEZE CRYOTHERAPY

**WHAT IT IS:** Invented in 1978 by a Japanese doctor to ease pain and inflammation in his arthritis patients, whole-body cryotherapy—which entails immersing oneself in a subzero environment for a very brief, controlled amount of time—is now being used by athletes such as LeBron James and Usain Bolt to improve muscle recovery, soreness, and mental agility; studies also show the treatment can help with depression and feelings of anxiety and stress. The jet set is catching on, too, lining up for sessions at Kryolife, a whole-body cryotherapy and fitness spa in Manhattan, to reap the purported cellulite-banishing, collagen-boosting, and wrinkle-erasing advantages. (Though there are currently no studies supporting this, convincing before-and-after testimonials from clients indicate that people have seen distinct improvement in these areas.) But just one session won't get you there. According to Kryolife CEO Joanna Fryben, "It takes 10 to 20 one-and-a-half- to three-minute sessions at temperatures ranging from minus 180 to minus 265 degrees every day to see the best results."

**COST:** A single session is \$90 for three minutes; a package of 10 appointments goes for \$700.

**WHAT I EXPECTED:** Hell! And an extremely cold version of it. But as a writer and a woman determined to look her best, I'm mesmerized by the prospect of rising out of my chair at the day's end not feeling brittle and dispirited from marathon sessions at my computer. Let's do this!

**WHAT IT'S ACTUALLY LIKE:** I'm naked except for gloves, ankle socks, and a pair of white leather clogs on my feet. It's a comical, pervy getup—like something a geriatric flasher might don—but I'm too terrified to laugh. My body is encased in the cryogenic chamber, an upright cylindrical pod open at the top so that my head pokes out, and I can see the technician operating the machine. The liquid nitrogen-chilled air wafts around me, yet, funny enough, a cold shower or walking around with no coat on a winter day feels much worse. According to Fryben, this is because there's moisture in the air outside, while there's none in the nitrogen air, making it feel less shocking, "and the exposure of our skin to temperatures lower than minus 76 degrees elicits a very different thermoregulatory response than being in an ice bath."

**MINUTE ONE:** My body tingles, a sensation that's hot and cold and dagger-sharp, like maybe my skin is being eaten away by phantom

ants. This is the nervous system's response to extreme cold; temperature receptors tell the brain to rush the body's blood supply to the core to insulate the vital organs, creating that pins-and-needles feeling that everyone's experienced at some point (but multiplied by, like, 300).

**MINUTE TWO AND A HALF:** All I'm thinking about is how I'd rather burn to death than freeze, and that all the luscious things in my life—my marriage, my family, delicious food, nature—I would trade in to just make this stop.

**MINUTE THREE:** The chamber door slides open and I run into the robe Fryben is holding out for me. As blood gets pumped back into my extremities, a wave of calm overtakes me. I'm euphoric and clearheaded and smiley, and part of it, of course, is that I'm no longer inside the chamber of doom. The other part



is attributable to the endorphins triggered by the extreme temperature (one of the reasons the treatment is used to help depression). I'm still grinning as Fryben leads me to a stationary bike and has me pedal for five minutes to stimulate blood flow.

**THE RESULTS:** My dreamy serenity goes on for hours, and right before bed I'm not thinking about things I have to do at work the next day or thank-you notes I need to write or the anxiety I get from trying to smash my unusually large work bag into the too-small locker at my yoga studio. I'm at peace, I'm warm, and I don't feel battered from desk-hunching, and these things have given me amnesia about the chamber. "I think I'll go back" is the last thought I have before drifting off to a very deep sleep.—Megan O'Neill



## SHADES OF GRAY TOOTH WHITENING

**WHAT IT IS:** LaserSmile, an FDA-approved procedure in which a laser is used to speed up the multihour whitening process we've grown accustomed to, minimizing the risk of tooth and gum sensitivity. **COST:** \$900. **WHAT I EXPECTED:** When I met for a consultation with Manhattan cosmetic dentist Pia Lieb, DDS—the modeling agency go-to for newbie mouth makeovers—she pronounced

my color "bad." Teeth are either yellow or gray (like mine), and gray enamel is harder to whiten. Lieb didn't promise that I'd see drastic improvement. **WHAT IT'S ACTUALLY LIKE:** After covering my gums with a protective gel, Lieb and her assistant applied the bleaching mixture. They moved a penlike laser device over my teeth for eight minutes to activate it, and then I sat there for another 20 minutes while the solution did its job. I felt nary a twinge—in part, Lieb said, because pain is usually caused by the peroxide leaking through microfractures in the teeth (we all have them). Thanks to the laser, she can get away with shorter applications of bleach, which would otherwise have to stay on for closer to an hour and a half. One session is enough for most people, but Lieb thought I needed another round due to the "shades of gray" issue. **THE RESULTS:** Forty-four hours later, I'm sipping coffee through a straw. When I decided to whiten my teeth, I wasn't prepared for the fact that post-treatment you have to wait two to three days to eat or drink anything with color, lest the pores in your enamel, which have been opened by the hydrogen peroxide solution, absorb the black or the green or the yellow—leaving you worse off than you were before. I was fine in the evenings (wine comes in white), but I couldn't survive a second morning, it turned out, without my coffee. My teeth do look a notch whiter, but I doubt I'll do the treatment again (Lieb recommends an annual session). I guess I'm not as obsessed with the discoloration of my teeth as I thought I was. My dentist may deem my teeth gray, but I prefer to think of them as white with grayish undertones.—Laurie Abraham



YOU'LL BE ADDICTED

# EYELASH EXTENSIONS

**WHAT IT IS:** A semipermanent procedure in which individual lashes are adhered to one's natural fringe to achieve a fuller, longer effect.

**COST:** Varies. At Soul Lee's Manhattan studio, it's \$460 for full extensions; \$150 for a touch-up after two to three weeks; \$200 for a touch-up after four weeks. (In the spirit of time = money, it should also be noted that the first session takes two hours; the touch-ups, roughly an hour.)

**WHAT I EXPECTED:** Minimum return on my investment. I went to Lee, a former Shu Uemura national makeup artist who, in addition to shaping brows, also plumps up the lashes of Chrissy Teigen and Uma Thurman. I knew I wouldn't end up looking like Tammy Faye Bakker, but still, my thinking was: Even if you had the best set of lashes in the whole world, how much of a difference in your appearance could it really make? My skepticism was compounded when I learned about the price, time, and (I thought) major concessions I'd have to make in obeisance to maintenance: sleeping on my back instead of my side or stomach; refraining from showering or even washing my face for 24 hours after the appointment; and fanning my extensions out with a lash brush at least once a day.

**WHAT IT'S ACTUALLY LIKE:** Lee painstakingly attaches extensions to the lid's top lashes one strand at a time (she adds roughly 75 to 80 total during

the session to supplement the average person's roughly 175 lashes per lid; her preferred material is a silk-and-synthetic combo), and those two hours (during which you must keep your eyes shut) don't pass quickly. Download as many podcasts as you can before your appointment. When, though, I was finally permitted to sit upright and given a hand mirror, I was amazed by the result, an oh-so-subtle improvement that lengthened my lashes, yes, but also made my eyes look bigger (and while I know this is in my imagination, seemed to even out my ruddy skin tone). It was an effect that I daresay no mascara, lash curler, or temporary lash extension could ever match. In the past few weeks, I've fielded an array of compliments—did you get a haircut? Did you lose weight?—from friends.

**THE RESULTS:** For all the skepticism I had going into this procedure, I actually didn't consider the most dangerous outcome of all: that I'd really like it. Like, really, *really* like it. I have a beauty-treatment regime that I can already barely keep up with, time- and budget-wise (highlights, manicures and pedicures, eyebrow shaping, and, once in a blue moon, a massage). But now I don't want to imagine myself without the extensions. Instead of investing in a new pair of sandals for spring, I think I might get a touch-up from Lee. —Amanda FitzSimons

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5 SHADES  
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