

Women pin hopes on needles

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IT still involves poking needles in the face, but cosmetic **acupuncture** is gaining a following among women hoping to halt the ageing process while avoiding invasive procedures such as Botox and facelifts.

Practitioners say the treatment can reduce the appearance of fine lines and boost collagen production by stimulating blood flow and "chi", the **Chinese** term for life force. Effects are said to last for months.

Acupuncturists believe each part of the face responds to a different part of the body, so treatments are designed to take a more holistic approach. Signs of ageing might point to a poor digestive system, for example.

Woollahra acupuncturist Jennifer Chalmers said her clinic had taken 50 calls about its "**acupuncture** facials", and 20 bookings last week alone.

"We've just been really inundated with interest by people," Ms Chalmers said. "Some say they were looking at Botox, but have thought that at least they would start with something less invasive. It may stave off the inevitable for these people whether it be Botox or a facelift."

Many younger women are attracted to the concept of preventive treatment.

"I try not to take people who are too young," Ms Chalmers said. "Some people who rang up are in their 20s and may not have fine lines on their face."

Bondi secretary Lucy Reid, 27, has had two sessions to reduce fine lines around her eyes.

"I am much more up for natural therapies and remedies rather than chemical treatments like Botox and other things, and I really wanted to try it," she said.

"I can definitely see some tightness. I'm really impressed so far."

Treatments can involve 20 needles inserted half a millimetre into the skin. Practitioners say it is painless, although clients might feel a "twinge".

Rodd Sanchez has practised his "facial rejuvenation" treatment for almost a year, after discovering the cosmetic benefits of **acupuncture** by chance. He charges \$150 for a 90-minute to two-hour session at his Macquarie Street clinic, and recommends a series of up to 12 treatments for noticeable effects.

"[Clients'] friends are asking them, 'Have you had something done?' " he said. However, he warned people to be cautious and to choose a recognised practitioner because, if the procedure was not done properly, it could lead to bruising.

