

If the idea of sticking needles in your face makes you think of frozen foreheads and trout pouts, think again – the combination of Chinese acupuncture techniques and Western light therapies is a winning one

If you've always thought that needles in the face would be a last resort in your battle against ageing, think again. They can actually be an incredible ally in reducing wrinkles and improving skin tone and elasticity. I'm not talking about needles filled with chemicals but rather the acupuncture version. Normally associated with healing injuries and pain relief, they are being increasingly used in skincare.

Face aficionado Amanda Nordell at the Dublin Wellness Centre on South William Street introduced me to the practice last year, combining it with facial cupping and the Chinese technique of gua sha. The results were extraordinary.

So when she invited me to try the new Synergy Facial she's offering – which she said was offering even better results – I jumped at the chance. Based on a technique refined by New York-based doctor of acupuncture Dr Travall Croom, it combines acupuncture with red light therapy and a microcurrent treatment. 'I tell my clients that I cannot prevent them from ageing, but I can prevent them from looking their age,' he has said.

It is a synergy of traditional Chinese medicine and non-invasive Western medicine aesthetics and Dr Croom uses the technique to treat many of the Victoria Secrets models – particularly in the run-up to their big annual show. 'They tell me that they look the best the day after the treatment and when they sit in the make-up chair, it already looks like they are wearing foundation,' he says.

Post-treatment, he says tight muscles – such as the ones on your forehead – will relax and lay flat, while the weak and sagging muscles – like your cheeks – will activate and lift up. Sign me up.

Amanda started with the insertion of the

acupuncture needles. I have a high pain threshold but this is not at all painful – though the areas around the nose are slightly more sensitive than the rest of the face. The needles are inserted in specific locations to help the

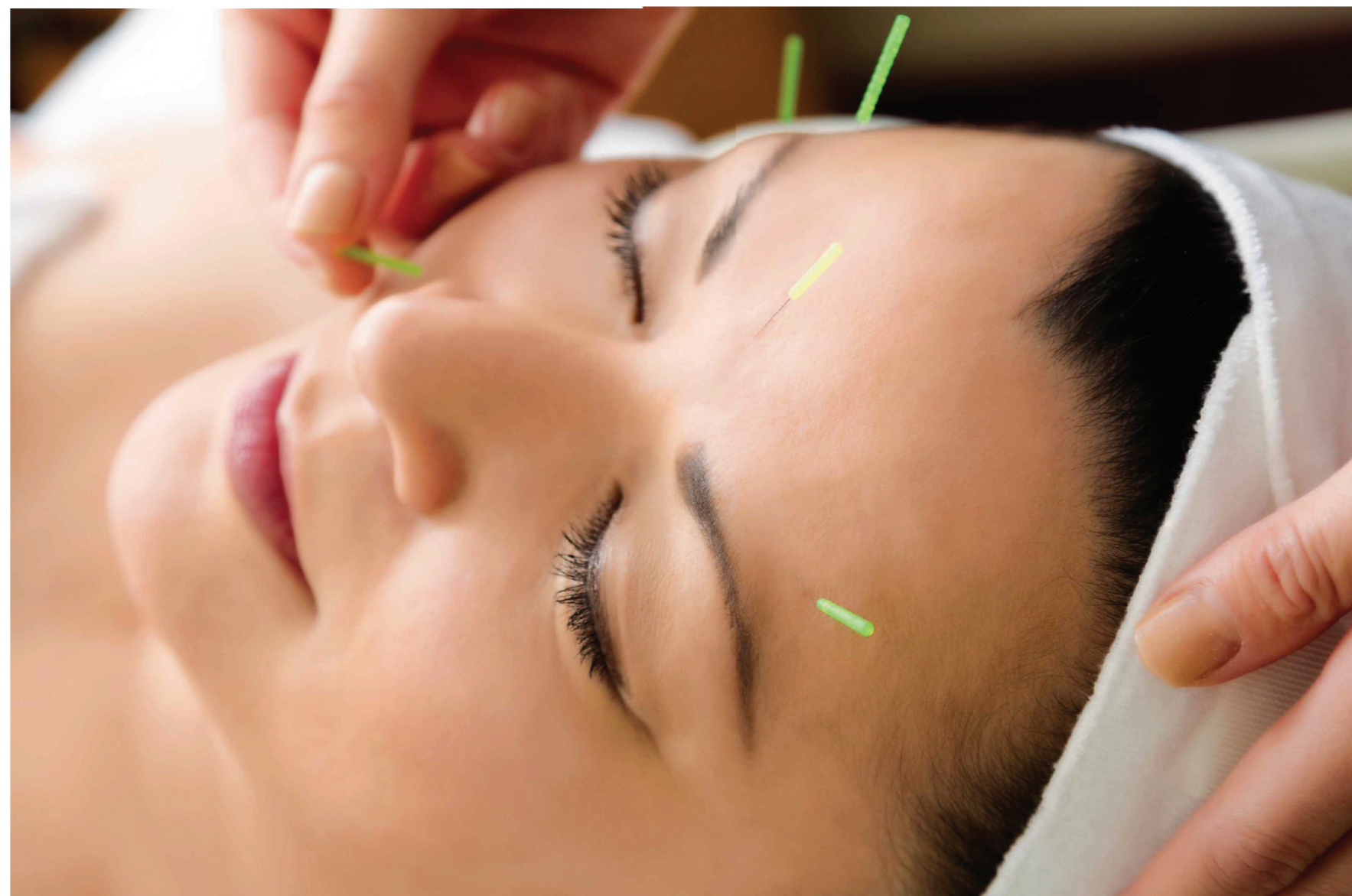
facial muscles that are tight to relax, as well as activate the muscles that have weakened, causing the face to sag and droop.

Inserting the fine acupuncture needles simulates the skin cells to turn over, triggers the

production of collagen and elastin, while relaxing the connective tissue between the skin and muscles.

She then placed goggles over my eyes and put a machine over my face that emitted a

flashing red light. This increases blood circulation, helping to bring more oxygen and nutrients to the tissues and cells. It improves the production of natural collagen and fibroblasts, two components that are important to make



your skin appear more youthful. It also repairs tissues and encourages natural healing, as well as lowering oxidative stress, something that highly associated with the ageing process.

Accompanied with a meditation tape, despite the flashing light, I found this incredibly relaxing and even fell asleep momentarily.

Amanda then removed the needles – again, painlessly – and applied an ice cold gel mask to the face, which she connected up to a microcurrent machine.

The currents can be barely felt – the only indication anything is happening is a mild metallic taste in your mouth.

The machine mirrors your own body's electrical output by emitting very similar low-voltage electrical currents. These trigger the body's production of amino acids and

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adenosine triphosphate (ATP), which accelerates cell repair and promotes healthier cell production. Again, I nodded off as the currents did their job.

Amanda finished off with some traditional Chinese cupping therapy, which clears and boosts the lymphatic system in the face, leaving you with a glowing, dewy look.

This therapy is perfect as a preparation for a special event, to boost the skin and slow down the ageing process, or as a treatment for acne, rosacea or other skin issues.

The results are instant and improve over the next few weeks. I turned 40 recently and did a course in the weeks up to my birthday. I've lost count of the number of times people have asked me recently if I've had Botox but I simply scrunch up my forehead and point them in Amanda's direction.

Synergy Facial is new to Ireland, and Amanda is the first acupuncturist in Dublin to be using this method. The treatment costs €130 and takes approximately 75 minutes. Amanda is available at Dublin Wellness Centre, 28 South William Street, Dublin 2, 01 633 0063

When East meets West