

beauty

Rush of young blood

Vampires are so hot right now, so it was only a matter of time until the beauty industry took notice. **Shelly Horton** puts the 'vampire facial' to the test.

A woman's neck and décolletage is one of the first areas to show signs of ageing, with crepe-like skin and cleavage wrinkles, and it's also one of the hardest areas to treat cosmetically.

Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) therapy – also known as a “vampire facial” – is a relatively new treatment in cosmetic medicine. Your own blood is drawn and then injected back into your neck and décolletage to make it look younger. Sounds creepy but there's science to back it up.

I arrive for the treatment and realise immediately it isn't going to be a feel-good facial. A clinical nurse specialist at All Saints Cosmedical, Claire O'Mara, performs the treatment under the guidance of the medical director, Dr Joseph Hkeik.

O'Mara explains to me: “It uses your own plasma to stimulate the body's healing process. Blood is extracted via a vein and then it... is spun in a centrifuge to separate platelet-rich cells, which are active in wound healing. When reinjected, it improves the quality of the tissue growing, rather than just hydrating damaged or aged skin.”

That's right – they're going to suck my blood.

PRP THERAPY

- ▶ All Saints Cosmedical at Parramatta, (02) 9890 9977.
- ▶ All Saints Cosmedical at Darlinghurst, (02) 9357 7557.
- ▶ Neck and décolletage, \$999-\$2999. Total price on consultation.

The treatment was performed at no charge for review purposes.

The treatment has star form, too. Tiger Woods has used platelet therapy to help him recover from knee surgery. “PRP has been used in bone surgery, ligament repair and chronic leg-ulcer treatment for years,” Hkeik says.

O'Mara combines PRP with fractional pearl laser, a treatment that affects the skin surface by producing thousands of microscopic columns that penetrate deep into the dermis.

“Combining these treatments works really well as we're affecting the skin cells that are still growing,” she says. “Any laser treatment is a controlled trauma to the skin; your body then reacts and says, ‘Let's go fill it with collagen and elastin to heal it.’”

So I have it done. Yep, it hurts. I am red and bruised for a few days. After six weeks, I go back. I could see a slight improvement in plumpness and fine lines but I decide not to follow through with the prescribed three treatments. O'Mara is disappointed. “Collagen production is a very slow process and can take months to show results,” she says.

She shows me the before and after shots of the treatment performed on older women with sun-damaged skin and they are remarkable. I would certainly do the full three treatments if I were concerned about my neck and décolletage looking old, so maybe in another five years or so. While the vampire facial might not make you immortal, it can make you look younger.

