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# Good Housekeeping

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# Ladies who LYMPH

NEAREST  
BEAUTY  
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Giving your lymphatic system some love is the key to looking better than ever, says beauty writer Ingeborg van Lotringen

**C**hances are you've already dabbled in some lymphatic drainage. If you think not, consider the facial massage demo you followed online during lockdown, or the jade roller you bought because everyone else had one... along, perhaps, with a gua sha stone,

which became TikTok's most searched beauty term earlier this year. Social media's hottest new trend is, as is so often the case, not new at all but rooted in ancient practices that were developed for good reason - that reason being the revving-up of the lymphatic system.

Possibly one of the most undervalued of our bodies' many awe-inspiring functional networks, the lymph is part of our immune system. Its many definitions, among them 'the body's water and waste drainage system', 'detox plant' and 'centre for disease control', give you a clue as to how crucial this vast network of channels, ducts and nodes, sitting right under the skin, really is. Its job is to bathe cells in liquid that facilitates delivery of nutrients and oxygen from the bloodstream. But it's also in charge of transporting foreign pollutants, metabolic waste and toxins away from those cells and into the body's toxin-processing stations - your liver and kidneys. The lymph and circulatory systems work together as a team,

**Limber up that lymph and you'll enjoy the pleasure of clear, glowing skin**

but the blood has a pump (your heart) that moves it around the body, while lymph fluid has to somehow stay in motion without. It relies entirely on movement, muscle contractions, gravity and the breath to keep flowing. If you need a bit of a push to take some more exercise, consider that a clogged, stagnant lymph system is involved in 70% of all chronic disease, says Donna Strong in her book *Love Your Lymph* (Vital Living Publishing). Or heed lymphovascular medicine specialist Professor Peter Mortimer, who says, 'Lymph fluid carries immune cells to our lymph glands, where all acquired immunity against infections and from vaccinations occurs. Hence, without a working lymph system, we would not succeed in overcoming infections such as Covid-19.'

Limber up that lymph and you'll reap not only the health benefits, but also the pleasure of clear, glowing skin that is devoid of puffiness. Unsurprisingly, with the multitude of beauty boons extending to acne control (lymph drainage helps to draw impurities from the skin) and rosacea relief (rosacea is linked to impaired immune function), many beauty treatments quietly include work on the lymphatic system. You just won't always realise it because the promise of 'instant sculpting' and 'line-plumping' techniques is so much sexier than talk about moving toxic waste from under the skin.

Here's our choice of the best lymph-loving treatments - some obvious, some not - which range in cost from pittance to £££. Your body and your face will thank you for doing all or any of them...

## 1 Using your body (and hands)

**COST: FREE**

Moving around more and taking those recommended 10,000 steps a day will have an immune-boosting effect by way of your lymph, as well as other health benefits. 'Do anything that elevates your heart rate on a daily basis; jumping up and down, bouncing while standing, stretching or doing inversions (lying on your back with your legs up against a wall is just as good as a handstand),' says Jules Wilcocks, founder of Body Ballancer lymphatic massage technology. She also recommends slow, deep breathing to help move lymph fluid around, and drinking water. Water makes up 96% of lymph fluid and needs constant replenishing. Jules recommends downing two litres a day. As for a free beauty boost, facialist and massage therapist Guendalina Gennari likes to start the day with a simple face de-puffer. 'Apply a little face oil for "slip" and, starting from the collarbone, work towards the backs of the ears, making little strokes with a flat hand (use your right hand to do the left side of the neck and vice versa),' she says. 'Do the same from the centre of your chin, and from the nasolabial folds outwards. Then work from the inner eye corner out to the temples and from the centre of the forehead to the hairline. Repeat each movement five times.' Easy!

## 2

### A gua sha

**COST: FROM £10**

These elongated heart-shaped pebbles can set you back as much as £155, but inexpensive ones, such as Revolution Skincare's, at £10, are just as good. The material doesn't matter, as long as it's smooth. Professionals use their gua sha vigorously to lift and 'scrape' skin, but at home we should only use them with the lightest touch for lymph drainage, says Guendalina. 'It should be held almost flat as you glide it along the skin, which shouldn't redden; anything that pulls at the skin is counter-productive. Use plenty of oil or, if you have oily skin, a mild cleansing milk, and always move the stone from the centre of the face to behind the ears and down to the collarbone, where there are lymph nodes (online demos are handy). Guendalina also likes using cryo sticks (ice-cold metal balls on sticks) for the same purpose, rolling them outwards from the centre of the face. 'The choice of at-home facial massage tools can be overwhelming,' she says, 'but these balls are soothingly cold, so good for sensitive skin.' We like Oxygen Boutique Cryo Face Tools, £55. Or try a jade roller, such as By Beauty Bay The Jade Face Roller, £12.



# 3

## Body brushing

**COST: £21**

Body brushing is a deceptively simple but effective way to keep your lymph moving and cellulite at bay. Brushes can be found for under a tenner, but it's best to choose one that has firm, natural bristles, such as the Elemis Body Detox Skin Brush, £21. It takes a minute or two to brush your entire body before showering; easy enough to become a habit. Using long, light strokes (remember, too much pressure means you'll bypass the lymph), work your way up your legs towards the groin. Then brush from the lower trunk, back and hands towards your collarbone, and from the neck down, also to the collarbone. This is because you have lymph nodes in your inner elbows and knees, in your armpits and groin and behind your ears, but the largest 'drainage portals' are just under the clavicles. It should feel tingly, not scratchy, and leave you feeling pleasantly invigorated.



# 4

## Vibrosculpt by Endosphères

**COST: FROM £120**

Endosphères Therapy (endospheres.com) is a massage technique that uses a roller device, involving silicone spheres that exert 'compressive microvibration'. First developed to treat lymphoedema in hospitals, it's a hi-tech pummelling that somehow targets muscles, circulation and the lymphatic system all at the same time. But don't expect it to be relaxing! Gentle and pain-free it isn't, though while you might feel black and blue afterwards, thankfully there's never any bruising. It also makes heavy legs feel lighter. For the best results in terms of draining excess fluid, reducing cellulite and a more sculpted look, 12 sessions are recommended, at about £1,200 for the course.

# 5

## Guendalina Gennari My Sculptural Face Lift

**COST: £95**

A trained pair of hands can truly help to resculpt a face. Guendalina Gennari (guendalinatheskinsculptor.com), based in London, works on the skin, muscles and ligaments that hold muscles in position. This plumps connective tissues and frees any adhesion of muscle fibres and connective tissue (fascia), so you look less drawn, achieving a visible lift over the course of an hour. 'I always start with lymphatic drainage before moving on to more vigorous massage techniques, to ensure the nodes are open and active enough to receive the lymph fluid and detoxify the face or body,' she says. 'This prevents puffiness the day after the treatment.' It also promotes brighter, more even-toned and less congested skin, alongside a more sculpted look.

# 6

## CACI Eye Revive

**COST: £40**

Muscle-toning microcurrent treatments, such as CACI (caci-international.co.uk), often feature lymphatic drainage. 'It ensures there's no excess fluid obstructing access to the muscles, as that would compromise the lifting and toning results we're after,' says holistic skincare expert Gemma Clare (gemmaclare.com). CACI's 30-minute Eye Revive treatment uses microcurrent probes to gently contract and strengthen orbital muscles for an 'eye-opening' effect, plus extensive lymph drainage massage to tone and smooth skin, using serum-infused rollers.

Eyes look significantly more perky afterwards. An at-home equivalent is the Foreo Bear Facial Toning Device, £279, which emits microcurrents to tone and sonic vibrations to 'shake' stagnant fluids into action. Passing it over the skin for a few minutes a day, working from the inside out, can significantly de-puff and tone the eyes and face. We also like the Skin Gym Beauty Lifter Vibrating T-bar, £64 (beautybay.com). These don't tone muscle, but their sonic vibrations work to wake up the lymph.



“Lymphatic drainage gives a more sculpted look to the face”



## Good looks



# 7

### HydraPresso at the Waterhouse Young Clinic

**COST: £350**

This lymph-loving 'power hour' at the Waterhouse Young Clinic in London involves a HydraFacial, which decongests, exfoliates and plumps facial tissues, and a Pressotherapy session to drain the body of stagnant lymph as well as stress. You don a sort of helmet-less spacesuit, inside which inflating air chambers move fluids and oxygen towards your lymph nodes, to relieve swelling, bloating and fatigue.

Meanwhile, your face is treated with a device boasting a 'vortex' tip that simultaneously blasts skin with jets of active serum (bespoke to your skin) and applies gentle suction to 'hoover out' impurities and perform facial lymph drainage.

Around the UK, HydraFacials cost from £120 ([hydrafacial.co.uk](http://hydrafacial.co.uk)), while hour-long Body Ballancer Pressotherapy sessions start at £70 ([bodyballancer.co.uk](http://bodyballancer.co.uk)).

### 8 Body Ballancer

**COST: £7,800**

Alternatively, you could join the likes of Jennifer Aniston and Chrissy Teigen and buy your very own Ballancer 505 Pressotherapy suit ([bodyballancer.co.uk](http://bodyballancer.co.uk)).

It comes up to just below your chest, and you simply lie down in it while its 24 air

chambers consecutively inflate and deflate in a mechanical imitation of the 'Vodder' manual lymph drainage technique. It feels hypnotic and utterly relaxing, and the body emerges visibly drained, in a good way. As you can't permanently 'fix' your lymphatic system, this might be the ultimate investment in your wellbeing - even if it is the price of a small car! □