

# The medi-spa movement

NO LONGER  
RESERVED FOR THE  
DOCTOR'S OFFICE,  
MICRODERMABRASION,  
BOTOX AND OTHER  
THERAPIES HELP  
REDEFINE THE  
SPA TREATMENT

ABOVE, Face Focus  
co-owner Maria Minea  
does photorejuvenation  
for client Iris Pereira.

In her 20s, Rosemary Casagrande didn't like what she saw in the mirror: large open pores and oily skin. By her 30s, the condition had escalated, leaving her face bumpy to the touch. Prescriptions from dermatologists and facials at day spas provided only temporary relief.

That all changed when she encountered the magical touch of Maria Minea, co-owner of Face Focus, a medi-spa in Englewood. Minea, a cosmetologist licensed both in the United States and her native Romania, combines 20 years of knowledge with state-of-the-art procedures to produce positive results. For Casagrande, it was microdermabrasion—a process that uses a vacuum and aluminum oxide crystals to pull away surface cells—that helped rejuvenate her skin. “When I walk out of that spa,” she says, “my face is literally glowing.”

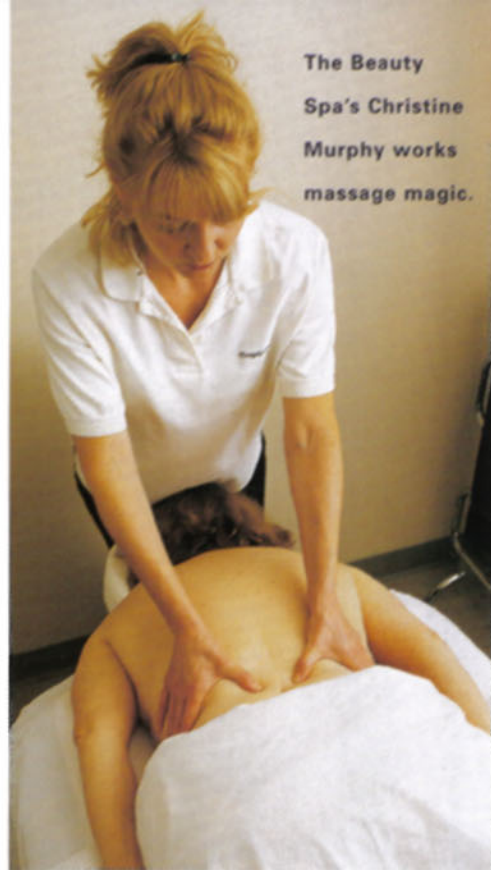
So, what exactly is a medi-spa? According to the International Medical Spa Association (IMSA), it's a health and beauty treatment center whose medical program is strictly supervised by a licensed healthcare professional. At The Beauty Spa in Englewood (363 Grand Avenue; 201-567-6020; [www.thebeautyspa.com](http://www.thebeautyspa.com)), for example, dermatologist Herbert Feinberg, M.D., handles the medical procedures; Face Focus (401 South Van Brunt Street, Englewood; 201-894-0500; [www.face-focus.com](http://www.face-focus.com)) operates under the medical guidance of Steve R. Fallek, M.D., a plastic and reconstructive surgeon.

continued

Regulations vary from state to state, and while a physician generally oversees advanced procedures, one is not always on the premises. Spa staff are licensed estheticians certified to use certain medical devices—such as low-level lasers—and medical-grade products that are normally obtained only through a dermatologist.

The concept of spas as part of a healthcare, rather than pampering, routine has long been popular in Europe, according to Hannelore Leavy, founder and executive director of IMSA. “If you look at the history of spas, they were always about medical treatments,” says Leavy, a native of Austria, where annual spa treatments are a way of life. “That changed in this country when the beauty industry took over in the '90s.”

Today, she says, spas are inching back toward



The Beauty Spa's Christine Murphy works massage magic.

the medical side. According to the International Spa Association, medi-spas have had the highest growth rate—133 percent—of any type of spa in the past five years.

The result is a hybrid: part beauty salon, part doctor's office. For clients, these facilities offer convenience (many have evening and weekend hours), comfort and an alternative to surgical procedures. Medi-spa visitors can choose from traditional facials, massages and body treatments as well as an array of noninvasive medical treatments (see “The Medi-Spa Menu,” opposite). Laser treatments performed by nurse practitioners or estheticians help to reduce wrinkles, for

example, as do Botox injections. Dermabrasions and microdermabrasions can lessen the appearance of acne, fine lines, sun damage and scarring.

Due to the potential risks—and the variety of practitioners offering these services—clients should do their homework, advises the Acne Resource Center. “You want to ask the same questions of spa professionals as you would of your own doctor,” says Leavy. “Where did you go to school? What license do you have? If they can't supply you with proof of certification, you walk!”

Dr. Fallek agrees. “I've taken care of many patients whose skin had been burned by laser treatments,” he cautions. “It scares me to think of these treatments being done in some back room by non-professionals.”

Also, make sure that the physician who is conducting or overseeing your spa treatment is board certified in the specialty you are seeking—plastic surgery or dermatology, for example. And be sure that the facility has a 24-hour call service in the event of side effects.

Dr. Fallek is the on-call physician for Face Focus and works on-site during the spa's “anti-aging parties,” held a few times a year. While the majority of party-goers are women 35 and older, there's a growing trend of men seeking to look younger. Notes esthetician Sophie Zimman, “Premature aging is now considered a sign of weakness—especially in this part of the country.”

Thanks to her treatments, however, Casagrande no longer worries about her face betraying her age: “I only wish my skin had looked like this when I was in my 20s!” she says.



More than just a simple soak, hydrotherapy (performed by The Beauty Spa's Paula Zuleta) relaxes muscles and eases tension.

# The medi-spa menu

*Some typical treatments offered at medi-spas:*

**Botox injections** Used to treat wrinkles in the forehead, between the eyes and in the “crow’s feet” areas, these treatments take between 10 and 30 minutes and involve a series of injections with a tiny needle. The results last three to six months, and there is little to no recovery time. Treatments range in price from \$400 to \$900 per session.

**Chemical peels** In this procedure, an acid solution is used to remove the top, damaged layer of skin, revealing the fresh skin underneath. This helps treat blemishes, wrinkles, acne and sun damage. Recovery time varies; consultation with a der-

matologist is required. Mild chemical peels run \$150 to \$300; full-face medium peels between \$1,000 and \$2,000; deep chemical peels \$2,500 to \$6,500.

**Collagen injections** Liquid collagen is injected through a small needle directly through a wrinkle, crease or skin fold to “plump up” the skin, reducing the appearance of wrinkles. There is little to no recovery time; prices range from \$300 to \$500 per treatment.

**Dermabrasion** Most often used to treat skin scarred by acne, accidents or previous surgery, dermabrasion is a form of plastic surgery in which a small hand-held tool is used to “sand down” areas of damaged skin. This gives the skin a smoother, fresher look and eventually facilitates the growth of a new, more even layer of skin. The procedure lasts about 90 minutes. Moderate discomfort may follow, and swelling may last up to two weeks. A full facial dermabrasion costs about \$4,000.

**Microdermabrasion** In this 30-minute procedure, used to treat minor skin imperfections, a hand-held device blasts



fine particles of table salt or aluminum oxide at the skin, then vacuums up the particles, along with any dirt and dead skin. Mild discomfort may last for a day or two. Cost varies but can start at \$350 per treatment.

**Photofacials** Pulses of intense light are applied to the full face, neck or cheeks to remove redness, pigmentation irregularities and sun damage. The process stimulates new collagen growth to improve skin texture, increase skin smoothness and reduce pore size. There is little to no recovery time required. Prices range from \$250 to \$450 for one-hour sessions.

**Photorejuvenation** A pulse of light is transmitted through a small, smooth, flat piece of glass placed over the skin. This process helps smooth wrinkles and diminish the appearance of age spots, broken capillaries and rosacea. Sessions last 15 to 45 minutes, depending on the area being treated. Minimal discomfort may follow. Prices start at around \$500 per treatment.

**Laser hair removal** Heat from a laser paralyzes hair follicles and impedes regrowth, while leaving the surrounding skin unharmed. The procedure eliminates 60 times more hair per treatment than electrolysis. Sessions typically last about 15 minutes. There is little to no recovery time required. Prices start at \$100 per session.

**Laser vein removal** In this procedure, brief pulses of light are aimed at a spider or small varicose vein, causing the vessel to coagulate and be absorbed by the body. Treatments are typically 15 to 30 minutes spread out over several weeks. Healing is generally rapid. Prices range from \$100 to \$400. *B*