

# yoga facials

by Vernetta Butler

**Tone your face with these simple exercises that everyone can do and cost nothing but a few minutes of your time each day.**

We spend hours working the muscles in the body but when it comes to our face, we pile on a myriad of creams and never think of exercise which would work the underlying structures, the muscles.

There are about 16 major muscles, 14 bones and assorted arteries, veins and blood vessels that help your face do the things it does. Muscles connect to both skin and bone, and form the 'cushion' on which the skin rests. If this cushion is flat or worn-out, the skin will not look its best and will start to sag, causing lines and wrinkles.

Like the muscles in our body, our facial muscles absorb and store a lot of stress and tension which then constricts blood vessels, limiting the flow of blood and nutrients. What's more, the tension can cause headaches and spread down into our neck and shoulders. Unless you relax those muscles, they get stiff and hard and look strained. But, like all exercise, it must be done regularly to achieve and maintain results.

Every good Yoga class should end with relaxation, tensing and releasing all muscles including the ones in the face. Your face works hard everyday and it deserves a break and some pampering.

Below is a complete facial exercise programme to help relax tense muscles, release stress and improve circulation. You don't have to do them all. Find the ones that work for you, or just do the massage. It's entirely up to you.

I often get asked if these exercises will cause baggy skin or lines. No, is the answer. Some plastic surgeons and beauty therapists promote and encourage the use of facial exercises, but some don't. Why would they promote something that helps anti-ageing when you could pay them to 'fix the problem'? Yoga Facial exercises have been around for a long time, but because there is no real financial gain, they are not well promoted.

## **sequence one - warm ups, massage and 'comfort' moves.**

### **the great rub**

*Benefits:* Releases stress and tension, particularly in the temples and jaw.

Place the index and middle fingers of both hands in the middle of your forehead. Rub your forehead by making small circles with your fingers.

Move your fingers across your brow and to your temples, pausing to give them a gentle massage. This is an area where we hold stress and tension that can often lead to headaches. Move down from your temples to the hinge of your jaw, pausing to massage your jaw muscles. From there, move across your cheeks and up along the side of your nose to your forehead. Repeat.

### **eye palming**

*Benefits:* Soothes the eyes and area around the eyes. Very helpful if you've had a long day staring at a computer screen or TV.

Find a comfortable seated position, either on floor on a cushion or in a chair. Sit with your back straight. Begin with your eyes closed. Focus on your breath as it moves in and out of your nostrils. Cool air in, warm air out. Rub your palms together very fast until they feel warm. Then cup them over your closed eyes. Repeat.

### **socket massage**

*Benefits:* Relaxes the eyes and surrounding areas, and relieves stress and tension.

Take your index and middle fingers of each hand and place them on either side of your nose just below the bridge. Rub your fingers up to the bridge of your nose and along your eyebrows. You'll feel a notch in your eye socket where the bone begins to turn downward. Rub the notch gently for a moment. Then follow the line of the socket rim down beneath the eye and back up along the side of your nose. Repeat 3-5 times.

### **scrunches**

*Benefits:* Increases circulation, relieving stress and tension.

Scrunch your face really tight. Purse your lips, draw your cheeks in toward your nose, pull your eyebrows down and bring the flesh of your chin up toward your mouth. Hold and release. Repeat.

### **cheek pinches**

*Benefit:* Improves circulation

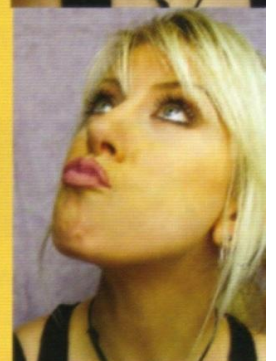
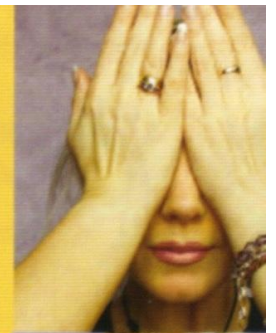
Pinch your cheeks, by grabbing bits of flesh and giving them a squeeze.

### **exercise sequence two – specific areas**

A lot of these exercises will seem very similar. They are but work on slightly different areas.

### **kissing moves**

- 1 Sit upright facing forward and purse your lips together. Lift your pursed lips towards your nose and keep there for 5 counts. Relax and repeat 5 times.
- 2 Pucker your lips slightly and try to bring the corners of



your mouth together as close as possible. Keep the lips in this position for 5 counts. Relax and repeat 5 times.

- 3 Move your lips into a puckered kiss and, while relaxing the kiss, keep your lips closed and curl your lips into your mouth. Hold this position for a count of 10 and repeat 5 times.
- 4 Sit relaxed with your lips barely open and pucker your lips outwards. While your lips are in the outward position, move your puckered top lip towards your nose. Hold in this position for 10 counts and repeat 5 times.

#### smiling moves

- 1 Sit upright facing forward, lips closed and teeth together. Smile as broadly as possible, without opening your lips. Hold for 5 counts. When relaxing, start to pucker your lips in a pointed kiss. Hold for 5 counts and relax. Repeat 10 times.
- 2 Clenched smile - Grit your teeth and open your lips as wide as possible. Feel your lips, cheeks, chin and neck stretch to their limit. Hold and release. Repeat.

#### cheek exercises

- 1 Sit upright facing forward with lips closed but relaxed. Pucker and pout your lips using the muscles in your cheeks. (Check with your fingers that you are using your cheek muscles.) Keep puckered for a count of 10. Relax and repeat 10 times.
- 2 Have a relaxed smile with your lips closed. Then suck in your cheeks towards and on to your teeth. Hold for 10 counts. Relax and repeat 10 times.
- 3 Look in a mirror while doing this exercise. Pout your top lip, turning the corners of your lips upwards and move your cheek muscles towards your eyes. Try to touch your nose with your top lip. Remain in the position for 10 counts. Relax and repeat 5 times.
- 4 Look in a mirror. Smile as widely as possible, keeping your lips closed and your mouth corners turned up. Draw the corners of your mouth up towards your ears. Wrinkle your nose and watch your cheek muscles move upwards. Hold for 5 counts. Relax and repeat 10 times.
- 5 Keep your teeth and lips closed. Blow air under your top lip. Hold for 10 counts. Move the air to your left cheek. Hold for 10. Move the air to your lower lip. Hold for 10. Move the air to your right cheek. Hold for 10. Repeat 5 times.

#### eye exercises

The skin around the eye, is the thinnest and most fragile found on the body. Wrinkles in this area age the face considerably, as the eyes are the central point of focus. Baggies can be helped with facial eye exercises.

- 1 Gently tone the muscles of the eyes by pressing two fingers on each side of your head, at the temples, while opening and closing your eyes rapidly. Repeat 5 times.
- 2 Sit upright with your eyes closed and relaxed. While keeping your eyes closed, first look down and then look up as far as possible. Repeat 10 times.
- 3 Sit upright with your eyes closed and relaxed. Keep your eyes closed while lifting your eyebrows and stretching your eyelids down as far as possible. Hold for 5 counts. Relax and repeat 5 times.
- 4 Sit upright with your eyes relaxed and open. Lift your

eyebrows while closing your top eyelids about half way, then open your eyelids wide until the whites of your eyes show above your iris.

- 5 Sit upright looking straight ahead with your eyes open. Look up, then down, keeping your head still. Repeat 10 times. Look left and right. Repeat 10 times.

#### forehead exercises

The area on the forehead, between the eyebrows, can easily become wrinkled. These exercises can be a great help.

- 1 Frown as much as possible and try to bring your eyebrows over your eyes while pulling the eyebrows toward one another. Lift your eyebrows while opening your eyes as wide as you can. Repeat 5 times.
- 2 Lie on your bed facing the ceiling, your head hanging over the edge. Raise your eyebrows as high as possible, your eyes opening very wide. Relax and repeat 10 times.
- 3 Sit upright facing forward. Lowering your eyebrows over your eyes, wrinkle your nose as far as possible, flaring your nostrils. Hold for a count of 10. Relax and repeat 5 times.

#### Neck /Throat Exercises

There's the old saying, 'If you want to know a persons age, look at their neck and throat!'

These exercises will help relieve and prevent a double chin, loose skin on the neck and throat area and will also help tone the muscles.

- 1 The Lion - A true Yoga move that should be fun take a deep breath in. Exhale forcefully, opening your mouth wide and sticking your tongue out as far as it will go, making an 'Aghhhhhh' sound. At the same time, open your eyes wide and look up. Repeat 3 times. Benefits: Relieves tension in the throat and face, stimulates the eyes and improves circulation.
- 2 Another useful exercise is to sit upright, tilting your head back looking at the ceiling while keeping your lips closed. Then start a chewing movement. Feel the muscles working in your neck and throat area. You will be truly amazed at the results. Repeat 20 times.
- 3 Next, pucker your lips in a kiss and stretch the kiss as if you were trying to reach the ceiling. Keep your lips puckered for 10 counts. Relax, bringing your head back to its normal position. Repeat 5 times.
- 4 Next, open your lips and stick your tongue out as if you were trying to touch your chin with the tip. Hold the position for 10 counts before returning your tongue and head to normal.
- 5 Next stretch your lower lip over your top lip as far as possible. Hold for a count of 5. Relax and repeat 5 times.

That's it! Practise regularly and notice the difference.

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