

A touch of the sun

The new tans are a paler shade of bronze, says **Bella Blissett**

FOR those sick and tired of grey winter skin, there is good news: the tan is back — but with a difference. Gone is the Tango-ed look of Wags and the tell-tale chocolate tan of a salon spray. Skin for this summer is all about the mid-tan. Celebrities such as Cat Deeley get the desired effect with a dusting of bronze just one or two shades darker than your natural skin tone. It's healthier than a real tan, more natural-looking than previous years' tans — and here's how to get it in London.

1. THE CLASSIC

St Tropez — the Wags' favourite — doesn't have to be mahogany-brown. After the dead skin cells have been exfoliated, ask your therapist to apply a mid-tan, (eg, the "Whipped Bronze" that adapts to your skin tone) paying particular attention to areas that catch the sun



naturally, such as your shoulders. £75 at Spa NK, 127-131 Westbourne Grove, W2; 020 7727 8002, www.spacenk.co.uk.

2. THE SLIMMER

SunSpa Natural Bronze Treatment — the first ever vitamin-based tan with antioxidants, gives a subtle glow and soft skin. Your therapist will contour your tan to your muscles (or where your muscles should be) for a more honed look. From £20. Call 01923 892 988 or visit www.sun-spa.co.uk to find your nearest salon.

3. THE ENERGISER

Bali Sun Spray Tan — more than just a bronzer, the tanning agent contains aromatherapy oils to re-energise you. Perfect for getting a hint of colour before a party. £30 at The Rosebery Rooms,

168 Clerkenwell Road, EC1; 020 7833 3820.

4. THE LUXURY

Ceremony of Sun — a lime and ginger scrub is first massaged into your skin to leave a smooth base for your tan. The Total Glow Self Tanning Cream is then applied in long strokes according to the depth of tan you require. Jojoba and Macadamia nut oils moisturise the skin, helping your glow last longer. £70 at Elemis Day Spa, 2-3 Lancashire Court, W1; 020 7499 4995, www.elemis.com

5. DIY

Ditch the "tanning moisturisers" — they leave a build-up of product on your skin, resulting in a patchy effect. Instead, get Vita Liberata's Silken Self Tanning Gel, by far the best on the market, which is white so you can see where you've applied it. Allow it to be absorbed overnight for a light colour that really is streak-free. £19.95 from Boots; www.boots.com.



Natural attraction: Cat Deeley's light tan is just a shade darker than a normal skin tone

As the popularity of Eastern therapy hits new levels, we put a range of Chinese medicine available in London to the test

LONDON is going China mad. "China in London" — the biggest celebration of the Chinese New Year outside Asia — now in its third season will include more than 500 events across the capital until April. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), one of the world's oldest medical systems, is also growing in popularity. Developed over 2,500 years, it is used to treat everything from anxiety, allergies and IBS to obesity, infertility, eczema and addictions.

TCM takes a holistic approach to treating the root cause of an ailment, rather than just the symptom as much of orthodox Western medicine does. Based upon theories such as yin-yang (opposite concepts that interrelate), the five elements (earth, fire, water, wood and metal) and the meridian system (pathways in the body), it aims to encourage the free flow of "qi" — or "life force".

By applying pressure to parts of the body that correspond to specific ailments — with the hands or needles — treatments such as acupuncture and reflexology can restore balance and health. But do they really work?

Here we test seven of London's top TCM treatments to discover if they do what they claim.

BELLA BLISSETT

Alcohol's higher toll

DR MARK PORTER'S MEDICAL NOTES

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THE British Medical Association (BMA) hopes tomorrow's Budget will include a significant rise in taxes on alcohol, a move it believes is central to reducing the increasing toll that drink exacts on public health.

Alcohol is today cheaper than ever, in real terms, and increasing affordability has been accompanied by a huge rise in consumption. Forty years ago the average Briton consumed half the European average, today it's more than double.

Increasing the price of alcohol has been shown to reduce consumption,

which in turn impacts on public health. Higher prices mean fewer deaths from liver disease, as well as reductions in secondary hazards such as road accidents, workplace injuries and alcohol-fuelled violence.

But a price hike alone is unlikely to be enough to address the problems as experiences elsewhere in Europe show. Finland, for example, has traditionally some of the heaviest duties on alcohol in Europe but it also has one of the highest rates of alcohol-related disease (currently the biggest single killer of Finns under 65).

If an increase in duty is to help, the extra revenue needs to be earmarked for awareness campaigns aimed at encouraging sensible drinking and more support for drinkers in trouble.

The truth about gout

RESEARCHERS in Edinburgh are a step closer to understanding why so many people are prone to gout — it's in their genes.

Gout can happen to almost anyone at any time and is caused by an inherited glitch in the metabolism rather than a particularly unhealthy lifestyle. It has long been known to run in families but a team at the Medical Research Council Human Genetics Unit is the first to identify the mutation responsible. It has discovered that men and women who carry a variation in their SLC2A gene have problems clearing excess levels of uric acid (a by-product of metabolism) which then crystallizes in their joints.

The discovery may one day lead to a cure. In the meantime, if you are prone to attacks, there is a lot you can do to protect yourself: stay well hydrated; avoid too much oily fish and offal; keep off very low-calorie diets; and use paracetamol or ibuprofen rather than aspirin. If these don't do the trick, ask your GP about preventative medication.

How not to avoid MRSA

ONE paradox of clinical medicine is that the public worry too much about distant threats and too little about those that pose a very real hazard. New figures showing that 100,000 people travelled abroad for surgery last year suggests that health tourism is no exception.

More than half of those surveyed said that concern about MRSA was a primary driver, an understandable concern but one based on a skewed impression of the risks of attracting the superbug in an NHS hospital.

Recent initiatives — such as

screening surgical patients and improving hygiene standards in hospitals — are starting to reduce MRSA rates in most British hospitals. We still compare poorly with most of Europe but the situation is nowhere as bad as some would have you believe.

Or, to put it another way, a typical healthy patient going into an average British hospital for a planned operation (such as a hernia, gallbladder or new hip) would have to stay on a public ward for more than 15 years to stand a more than even chance of contracting MRSA.

FEELGOOD FACTOR

feelgoodfactor@standard.co.uk

The revitalised Spa at Chewton Glen offers **Anne McElvoy** a choice of capital treatments out of town



Face value: top spa treatment

What is it?

Chewton Glen was a grand but slightly fusty "London escape" which has had an overhaul and acquired the only Linda Meredith spa, with trained facialists and products, outside the capital.

What's it like?

A spacious 1930s house in huge grounds — and you can walk to the sea in 20 minutes. There's a helipad, should you require it. It doesn't look like a spa hotel on arrival: the spa is separate from the main building. The cooking is excellent.

What does it do for me?

Country hotel spas tend to be in the grip of chain companies, so you rarely get a distinctive treatment and often feel you could have done better back in town. Here the facials have been adapted from the London salon to include more massage. It does all the basics of the Knightsbridge skin diva though — glycolic peel, minute examination of the lunar landscape of your stressed skin and soothing treatments designed for men as well as women.

Moulton Brown body treatments are a good way for tense city dwellers to start their stay.

What does it claim?

Meredith is "results-based" — ie it seeks to offer more than just a nice clean up and a massage. And it is based on careful diagnosis of what's gone wrong to start with. Prepare to hear it like it is. Meredith's own gommage is used for skin refining and her best-selling Vtox cream as a Botox replacement for treating fine lines. A new skin serum claims to make moisturizing more effective. Clients including Gwyneth Paltrow, Sadie Frost and Colin Firth trust her technique.

Any science to it?

LM uses its fair share of chemistry but naturally based products distinguish it from the "laboratory" feeling of much top-range skin care. The oxygen treatment helps cell regeneration. Algae-based serum is said to increase absorption of products. Fruit acid skin peels do the job but don't leave a sore feeling.

Anything else?

Great pilates class — either short bursts for people who want to get up on their break at 7.30am — or gentler stretching and toning in the afternoon. The hydro-pool is an extravagant blue complex, ideal for Russian oligarchs and the only OTT bit in the tasteful place. Good DVD library, tennis courts and golf.

Where and how much?

New Milton, Hampshire. Less than two hours by train. Some midweek deals and April offers. Rooms start at about £200. Suites for the non-dorm classes from £700/night, treatments from £60-£150.

ACUPUNCTURE

What's the problem? Insomnia.

Solution: Acupuncture.

How it works: Acupuncture has been proved effective in treating many conditions by stimulating the organs to rebalance the physical body.

What's it like? During a thorough assessment Dr Han asked me a myriad of questions. Still marginally sceptical, I then lay on my back and had fine needles placed in my stomach, on my legs and two in my head. The sensation as each needle was inserted was strange and heavy as Dr Han helped the energy flow through the body. A heater was placed over me and the lights were turned out for half an hour. One of the needles in my head was ticking, which may sound torturous but actually served to invite me to sleep almost instantly.

Verdict: Excellent. I emerged yawning like a camel and, though my sleep problems haven't resolved fully, I will definitely go back.

Where and price: Chinese Healthcare Centre, 85 Chamberlayne Road, NW10 (020 8964 2421), £30 for an hour; £10 for initial consultation.

CONNIE ALLFREY

TUINA MASSAGE

What's the problem? Cellulite.

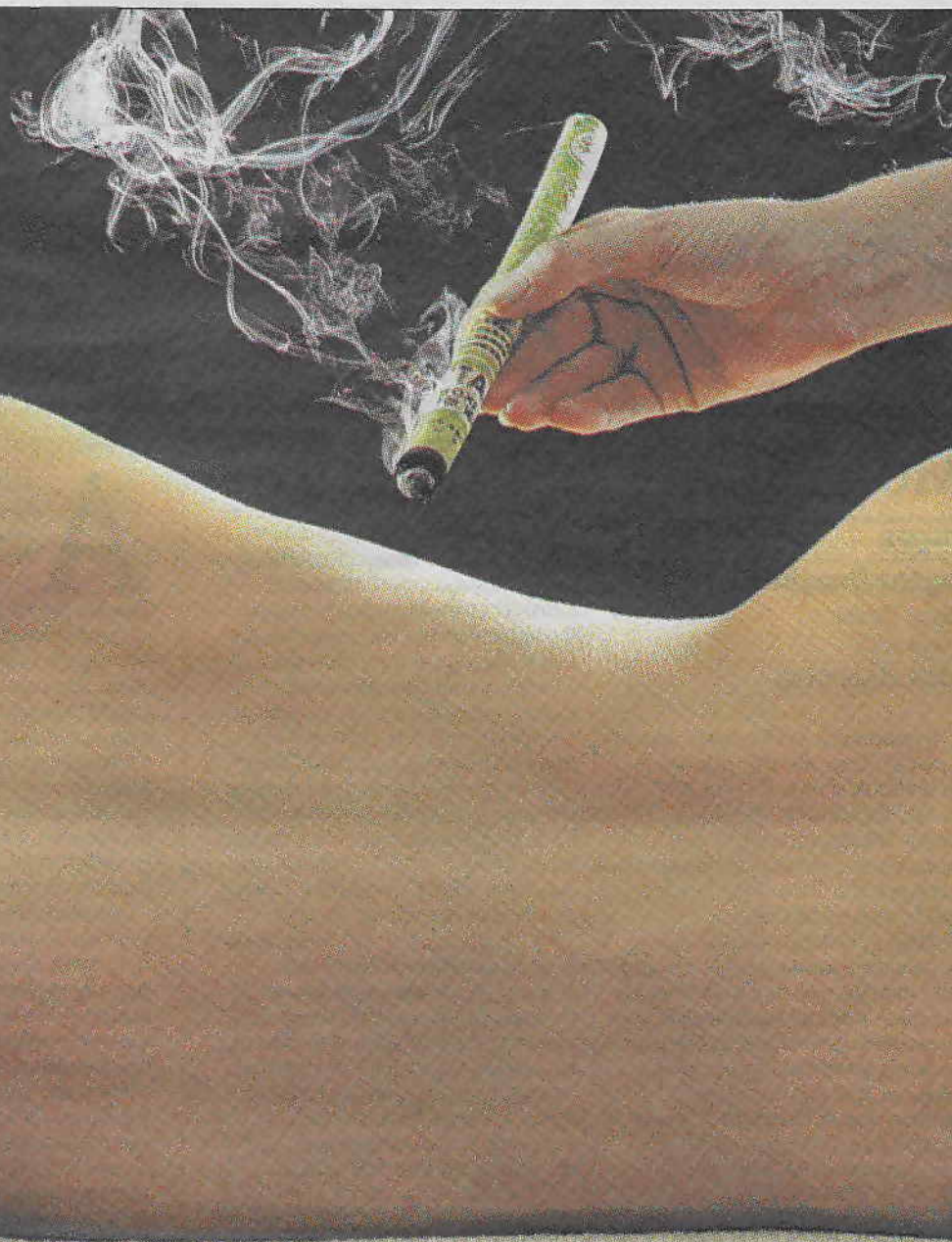
Solution: Targeted tuina (pronounced "twee-nah"), a needle-free massage using chrysanthemum oil.

How it works: By pummeling muscles, tuina gets the body's "chi" (energy) and circulation moving properly again — ridding thighs of their toxins and lumpiness.

What's it like? Tuina is a hardcore massage. My therapist pounded away at my entire body for an hour.

Verdict: My skin felt soft but sadly those stubborn dimples remain. It's a problem I attribute more to the odd glass of wine than anything else, so upping my water intake would

China syndrome



Soothing: moxibustion, one of many Traditional Chinese Medicine practices, involves burning mugwort sticks to relieve pain

apparently be more helpful.
Where and price: Chinalife, 99 Camden High Street, NW1 (020 7388 6704, www.chinalifeweb.com), £55 for one hour.

SOPHIA MONEY-COUTTS

BACK INVERSION THERAPY

What's the problem? Back pain related to a spinal curvature.
Solution: Back inversion therapy and acupuncture.
How it works: By hanging almost upside down from a frame-like contraption. The theory is you release pressure on painful joints and give your spine an unprecedented stretch.
What's it like? Dr Wang who took my pulse, checked my tongue and diagnosed an imbalance of liver energy. Nothing to do with excess wine consumption, I was assured, but this was probably why I was feeling a bit "stressed" and having difficulty sleeping. Because my back pain had built up over 20 years, he recommended acupuncture as well as a session on the back inversion machine. The acupuncture was relaxing but the inversion therapy was very odd indeed. Hanging bat like from a swinging frame causes an initial rush of blood to the head, but once you relax the sensation of your body stretching out is quite enjoyable.
Verdict: The acupuncture certainly did me good. My back pain was temporarily relieved and my insomnia cured. As for the inversion machine, I spent only 10 minutes upside down but gained 2 cm in height and left feeling energised. I'd do it again, but the acupuncture may be better long-term.
Where and price: Institute of Chinese Medicine, 44-46 Chandos Place WC2 (020 7836 5220, www.instituteofchinese-medicine.org), back inversion £5 for 10-20 minutes, acupuncture from £30.

CHARLOTTE ROSS

REFLEXOLOGY

What's the problem? Migraines.
Solution: Reflexology.
How it works: First founded in ancient China, reflexology claims that the foot corresponds to other areas of the body and that by manipulating these areas you can improve your health and target certain problems.
What's it like? All you have to do is lie down in a dimly lit room and proffer your feet to the therapist. Mine worked on the "migraine" area of my foot — in this case the big toe (which amazingly covers the brain, sinuses, voice, pituitary gland, neck and throat). She used tiny massage movements to break down the calcium deposits, declaring I had a "crunchy head". There can surely be few things more relaxing in life than someone working on your much abused feet.
Verdict: Although the medical profession doesn't believe in this sort of therapy, there definitely seemed to be a link between my feet and other parts of my body. My migraines affect

the left side of the head and my left toe demanded much more manipulation. After half an hour, I felt deeply relaxed and even light-headed. If you haven't got time to strip off and get a full body massage, this sort of therapy is highly recommended.

Where and price: All About Me, 311 Chiswick High Road, W4 (020 8987 9917, www.lisamartinreflexology.co.uk), £40 for one hour.

JACKIE ANNESLEY

COSMETIC ACUPUNCTURE

What's the problem? Dark eye circles.
Solution: Cosmetic acupuncture.
How it works: Stars including Madonna are said to use it to combat general ageing signs, including sagging facial muscles and skin tone. The theory is that by stimulating key systems in the body, muscles perk up and skin benefits from boosted circulation.
What's it like? My experience began with a relaxing cleansing facial and massage, followed by a nourishing face mask. Then the skilled practitioner

inserted needles around my face and head — areas that were quite sensitive for a few moments — and a few around my body for circulation and detoxification. Once the needles were in, the discomfort subsided, and I was left in a warm cocoon for 20 minutes while the needles worked their magic.
Verdict: The next day my dark circles had almost entirely vanished — impressive results for a lifelong sufferer of eye bags. They came back but a second session did the trick again.
Where and price: Chinalife, 99 Camden High Street, NW1 (020 7388 6704, www.chinalifeweb.com), £79.

MIRANDA MCEWAN

HYPNOPUNCTURE

What's the problem? I need to lose a stone.
Solution: Hypnopuncture.
How it works: A combination of hypnosis and acupuncture is said to have double the impact on problems such as excess weight and smoking. The hypnotherapy targets your behaviour, while your bodily functions are rebalanced by acupuncture.
What's it like? Paul Haynes hypnotised me and his cohort Alex Owen dealt with the needles. After a brief consultation, during which I was weighed and had my various fat contents measured, I lay down on a bed and had acupuncture needles inserted in parts of my feet, shins, stomach, ears, head and wrists. The sorest point was on my shin — tellingly the meridian that controls excess weight — as well as a corresponding point on my ear. Then Paul talked me into a trance, and implanted various messages into my mind that would help control how much I eat and exercise. Afterwards Alex placed seven tiny gold "buds" on points around my ear for me to press during the week to reinstate the

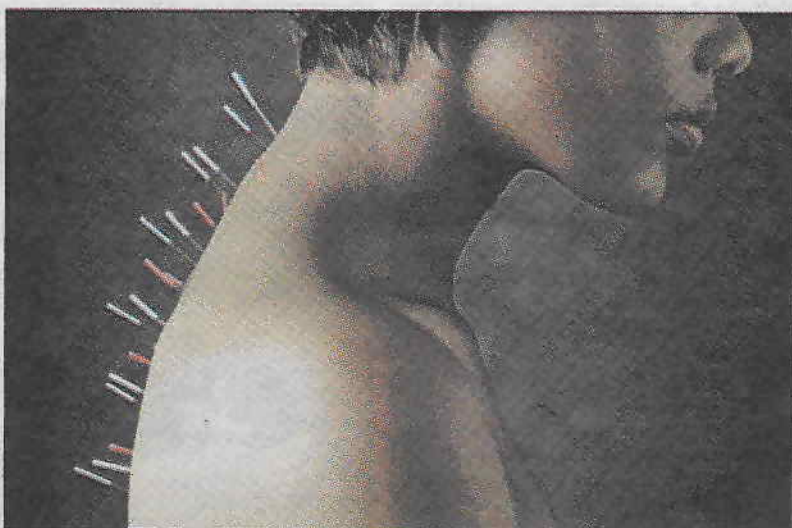
treatment, boosting metabolism and curbing bad thoughts about biscuits.
Verdict: The treatment was pleasant and left me feeling content and buzzy. I've been automatically cooking and eating less, and avoiding all fatty and dairy-based foods. Not a single snack has passed my lips. My waistband feels looser and I've decided to continue the treatments for six weeks with the promise of losing 2-3lb a week.
Where and price: Currently on offer at the Asante Academy in Archway but soon to move to the TCM centre in Highgate village. To make an appointment contact Alex or Paul direct on 07528 646923. (www.hypnopuncture.co.uk), £60 per weekly session, recommended six-week course.

CHARLOTTE ROSS

MOXIBUSTION

What's the problem? Tiredness.
Solution: Moxibustion.
How it works: A combination of acupuncture and cupping, with mugwort burned on top of the glass cups to stimulate circulation.
What's it like? Dimple, a qualified practitioner in TCM, diagnosed me with chi deficiency and internal coldness. I then lay down on my front and Dimple placed glass cups on my back and lit the mugwort to heat them up. Moxibustion stimulates the chi, or body energy. Finally my back was rubbed and massaged with a piece of jade and guashayou oil (with ginseng) to flush out toxins.
Verdict: Surprisingly relaxing. I barely felt the needles and enjoyed being rubbed with jade. Afterwards felt floaty, calm and better able to function.
Where and price: Aculiving, 107 Sheen Road, Richmond (07950 484 068, www.aculiving.com), £60 per hour initial consultation, £45 follow-on.

JO FERNANDEZ



Needle work: acupuncture is effective in treating a wide range of ailments