

SpaBeauty

Writer Christina Ko

Smooth Operator

We're spoiled for choice today when it comes to beauty technology. But with limited bathroom counter space and a plethora of options, which machines – if any – are best?



It's hard to decide whether the beauty world is more obsessed with living in the past or looking ahead to the future. On one hand, brands tout ancient, time-tested rituals, on the other, there's an endless stream proclaiming new discoveries, from engineered ingredients to gimmicky formulations. Recently, more science-backed procedures promise to revolutionise the way we look at skincare today.

It's now fairly common to hear girlfriends discussing the merits of HIFU (high-intensity

focused ultrasound) versus Thermage skin tightening, or for someone to pop into the salon instead of a dermatologist for a LED facial, or to eradicate unwanted hair forever with laser hair removal. But a growing trend is a proliferation of at-home technology. Contraptions range from a Philips' Eye Brightener that reduces undereye circles to Skin Inc's Optimizer Voyage Tri-Light++ which uses light therapy to fight concerns such as acne and wrinkles.

But does it work? And does the growth of home beauty technology actually mean

that you can cut down on visits to trained professionals? As with many skincare products, some is good, some doesn't work at all, and a lot depends on your specific needs and personal dedication.

For example, Teresa Tarmey's eponymous line includes two home kits that make what look like salon treatments easy to administer in the comfort of your own bathroom. Her CryoBall is a metal sphere that lives in your freezer and comes out to depuff before special occasions, and offers similar effects that you'd expect from a cryofacial at a salon.

The kit also comes with a hyaluronic acid formula and silicone mask so you have a full ritual at your fingertips. Her microneedling kit, Tarmey suggests, offers results that may even exceed that of a salon treatment. By using it once a week to increase product penetration, you'll get better results over the suggested 12-week course than you would with a single session in her salon, which probably costs around the same — but you need to stick to the programme and the products that come with it.

Another celebrity facialist, Angela Caglia, has also transformed salon treatments into an easy home-use format, with a twist on an ancient 'device' that's recently found favour again in beauty routines, the rose quartz roller. Her vibrating version "brings new innovation to this ancient Chinese skincare ritual," she says. It's known to remove undereye puffiness, boost circulation, speed up cell turnover and help with lymphatic drainage.. "With 6,000 sonic vibrations per minute, this roller instantly makes skin appear more toned, sculpted and brighter," she says. "My mission is to create an easy-to-use, efficacious, luxury natural product line that empowers my customers to create their own facial self-care rituals at home."

But is all this high-tech machinery shooting their creators in the foot? If these home devices really are as revolutionary as touted, then who needs human hands or spa-grade technology?

Shoshana Weinberg, spa director of the Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong's wellness facility and programmes, doesn't find that the evolution of home-care technology has necessarily affected the spa industry negatively. She says, "We are 70 per cent hands-on. We see that people might have a regimen at home, but they need to come to us, as hands do play a huge



role in technology. For instance, with M6 [Endermologie slimming technology], you get great results, but you need to know the technique of the machine, as well as how many times you should do it, what you should combine that with. So if you have a slimming type of machine at home, you're not going to get that same result because we also finish it with our hands."

The Spa's Second Skin Facial uses products and technology from Biologique Recherche to lift and regenerate, and qualified trainers come to Hong Kong twice a year just to maintain technique standards. Weinberg says, "When we're using the Second Skin machine, it's 10 per cent of the treatment. It's an important 10 per cent, but we're also using the hands to do that lifting, lymphatic drainage, getting to the muscles, massaging them in the right places, upwards and downwards."

That said, Weinberg wouldn't pass on home technology either. If anything, it's an essential part of maintenance between professional treatments. She says, "Home care is one of the most important things,

as long as you have the right products and right machines. I believe in technology but combined with the touch of humans."

A wise course of action is to invest in machinery that suits your daily needs and lifestyle. If blocked pores plague you despite regular deep-cleansing facials, then it would be wise to invest in a Foreo Luna, whose silicone bristles can help gently exfoliate on a more regular basis. SK-II's Magnetic Booster is another simple-to-use device that enables skincare products to penetrate deeper — it won't replace salon treatments — but it certainly gives your existing serums and essences more bang for their buck.

And let's face it, water retention is something that plagues most of us, so unless you're a Rockefeller with a therapist on staff daily, a roller of some sort — vibrating or not — isn't a bad idea for the body or face. But they aren't everything. "Machines are secondary," Weinberg says.. "Remember, it's the feeling, the subtle energy that moves the matter. It's the state of mind that is important to how beautiful you look and how healthy you are. I always come back to that." 🌿