

Whole Health

By approaching your body's overall health, holistic spas help prevent the damage of aging

In a time when injectable fillers, lasers and creams can offer quick fixes for signs of aging, spa treatments may seem like lightweight, "airy-fairy" solutions. But the fact is holistic spa therapies are proving equally useful against dull skin and wrinkle lines for the long haul.

While spas have long focused on relaxation and de-stressing environments, there is a new and noticeable trend toward embracing the use of natural botanical-based products and offering anti-aging panaceas by emphasizing the mind-body-spirit connection. From simple aromatherapy and meditation to nutrition and lifestyle coaching, many wellness spas are taking a big-picture approach to fighting facial aging by addressing our general health.

"Definitely, what we're doing on the inside is going to show the most on the outside," says Kimberly Wise, holistic practitioner and founder of Equilibrium Wellness in Marda Loop. "We don't believe any one condition comes from just *one* thing. All systems are interconnected and the whole body, your whole lifestyle, is going to have an impact on the appearance of your face."

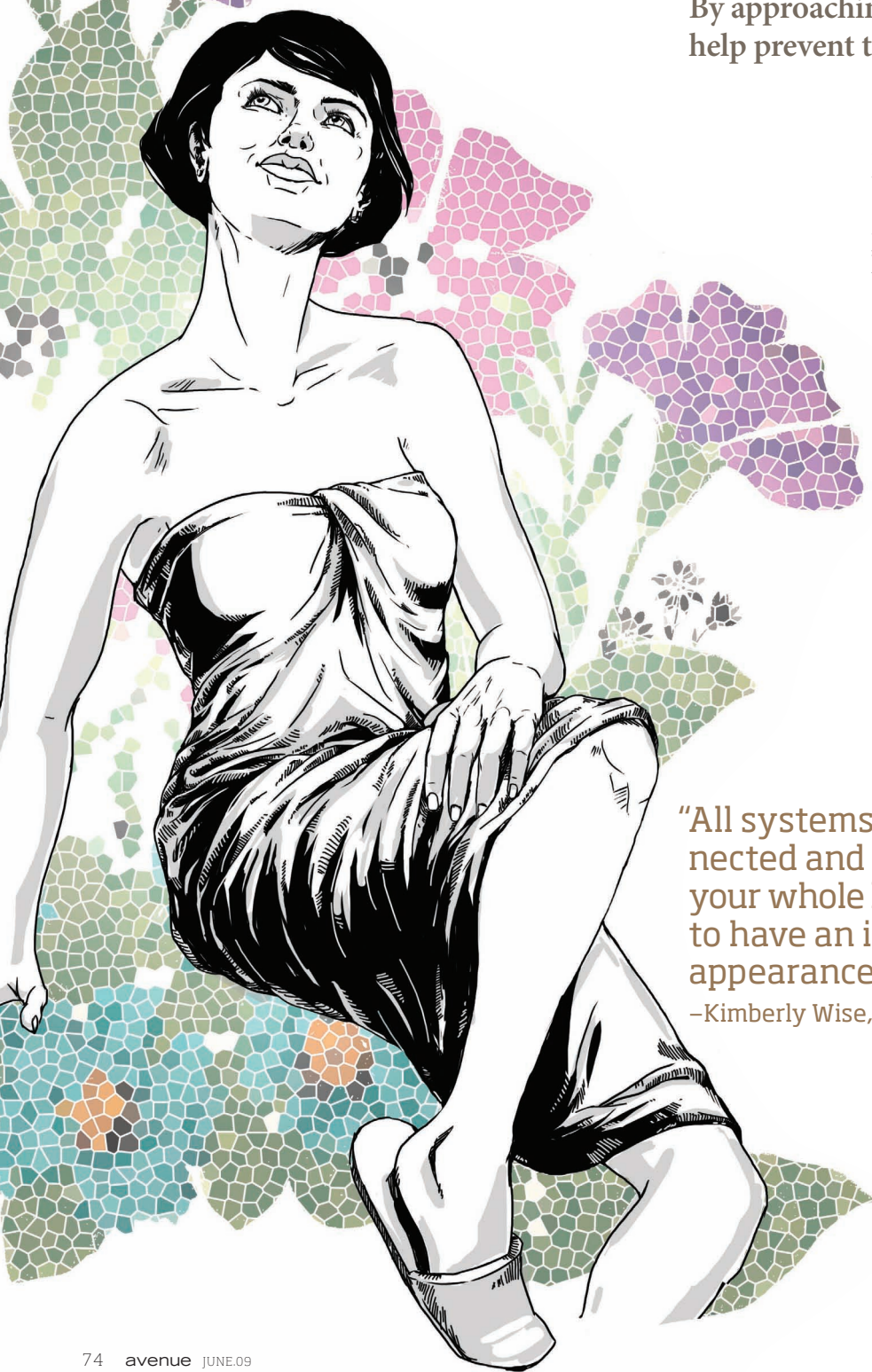
Wise says that while she doesn't discourage people from lasers and topical treatments, they should keep in mind these are superficial treatments addressing only the visible appearance of aging. "It isn't going to result in long-term effects necessarily," Wise says.

At Equilibrium, group nutrition classes and one-on-one coaching address optimal digestion techniques and tailor individual diet plans because, as Wise says, *how* you eat is just as important as *what* you eat.

"Any of the nutrition classes we offer are geared toward health, where we talk about omega fats and other factors that affect your overall skin health," she says. The spa also offers one-on-one fitness classes and lifestyle coaching; ➤➤

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—Kimberly Wise, holistic practitioner



Wise emphasizes the importance of doing the two in tandem. “The more you move, the more you circulate the oxygen and nutrients to all your tissues and blood flow to your capillaries, which also affects your skin.”

Aside from revitalizing your skin through longer-term exercise and diet choices, treatments and an environment that target overall skin health are equally important. The Spa Ritual, located in the northwest’s Crowfoot shopping area, was created with the belief that holistic treatments, which target your whole body rather than just your face, actually enhance the effectiveness of subsequent facial-rejuvenation procedures. This philosophy is evident in the setup of the facility itself, including the initial slipper ceremony greeting where visitors to the spa are invited to leave the out-side behind when changing from their outdoor footwear into spa sandals.

In addition to providing anti-aging regenerative facials and refining fruit-acid facials that exfoliate and reduce the appearance of fine lines, the facility boasts a Royal Thai Suite with aromatherapy steam and showers. Guests at the spa can also drink decongestant blended teas in the Tea Ceremony Room before a therapeutic massage, or they can recline, relax and detox on stone loungers.

“When you go through the steam therapy, eucalyptus in the steam helps to calm you and

start the detoxification and purification of your skin,” explains spa director Vivienne O’Keeffe. “If you can detoxify the entire surface area, the treatment is more effective. It’s about helping the body function effectively. If we can’t get the dead keratinized cells off the skin, we’re wasting our time with any active ingredients we’d be putting on, anyway.”

Taking this approach one step further, some spas even administer holistic therapies simultaneously with certain medical treatments. For example, at Sublime Energy Medical Spa on 17th Avenue, clients can get reflexology or therapeutic massages done while they’re getting laser work or injections.

“It not only calms you but indirectly influences how receptive you are to the healing process afterward,” says founder, CEO and medical director Dr. Kathryn Dundas.

According to Dundas, the main causes of facial aging are sun damage, hormone decline and our overall lifestyle choices. When assessing clients, getting to the root causes behind the appearance of their skin can require different and often multiple approaches. “Holistic means you’re drawing from all sorts of disciplines and modalities and combining them specifically for that person,” Dundas says. “There’s not a single treatment that’s best for everyone.”

To that end, Sublime’s holistic nutritionists help evaluate your diet, whether it’s for anti-aging, weight loss, detox or treating a medical condition. Physicians also use hormone testing and lab tests to identify any diet deficiencies and to prescribe any necessary hormone supplements.

“When we are under a lot of stress, we see those changes in our skin.”

–Dr. Kathryn Dundas, founder of Sublime Energy Medical Spa

The spa’s integrative medical consults cover not only food choices but what Dundas calls “counselling in lifestyle,” such as stress management, reiki meditation, yoga and other energy healing therapies.

“When you look at your skin, your gut and your neurological system, they were all developed out of the same cells. It’s all tied in,” says Dundas. “Bottom line is that you’re looking at skin tightening, trying to tighten up that collagen that as we age loses its consistency and smoothing the skin to make it look more luminous and radiating.

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When it comes to our skin, the holistic approach calls into question all other aspects of our lifestyle and ultimately puts our overall health first and esthetics second. So while more invasive treatments, such as the use of laser, Botox or fillers, can erase some of the damage we’ve done in the past, consistent spa treatments help to minimize future damage by lowering stress and improving lifestyle.

“I see it as the ultimate prevention,” says Dundas. “If you’re doing everything you can to maintain your health, to keep the stress down and optimize nutrition ... then that’s anti-aging medicine in itself.”

