

One-stop body shops

Modern spas are a world away from the peach-towel and pot-pourri-afflicted relics of the past.



▲ The modern spa takes many different forms and offers many different treatments from holistic to high-science

It is no longer simply about feeling good. It is about achieving a result, to the extent that many procedures, such as chemical peels and Botox, formerly available only in a medical setting, are now widely accessible on the high street.

It's an overtly American concept but one that is perhaps the best suited to tough times: when the budget is tight, efficiency and efficacy have

far more of a market than the altogether more vague idea of pampering prettification.

The original concept of the spa involved something a little gentler than a chemical peel but the aim – to achieve improved health and appearance through physical treatment – was the same.

The word derives from the Belgian town of Spa, known for its he-

aling waters from the 17th century onwards. The term was later applied to anywhere that offered a natural spring, although the practice of engaging with healing waters dates back to the Romans.

Today, the very best spas offer a happy convergence between the serious science of the dermatologist's consulting room and the pampering relaxation of home treatments – and,

best of all, in the hands of professionals.

New technologies have enriched the spa experience. For instance, in many clinics LED light has become a routine step of facials - the light can help calm inflammation and reduce redness after a client's skin has been cleansed, extracted, and exfoliated.

trend that began in America - where spa revenues in 2007 were \$10.9 billion - but which has found firm footing and favour here.

The lines between professional and at-home treatment, doctor and beautician, have long since blurred: now, liposuction and lip implants are on the menu alongside

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Certain technologies are combined and used together for even better results; Sarah Chapman, a London facialist, uses an “iontophoresis microcurrent” during facials in her Chelsea clinic because while her facial and massage alone bestow a glow, the transdermal current can achieve something even better, lifting and plumping the skin: iontophoresis is a non-invasive and pain-free method of pushing high concentrations of an active substance through the skin using a small electrical charge.

Champneys, a stalwart of the spa scene in the UK, now offers microdermabrasion, skin-resurfacing and the “Babor Power Lift and Collagen Facial”, alongside more traditional treatments.

The new titles claimed by some spas gives some evidence of how they see their new status - medi-spas, and medi-skin “clinics” abound. Like most developments in beauty, it's a

spray tans and manicures. Many spas will boast aesthetic nurses, nurse technicians, traditional beauticians and several permutations in-between.

As the barriers come down, though, it is important to know what you are getting into - and with whom.

For Chapman, the value of the extras - from the oxygen facials to electric-current stimulation - depends on whose hands they are in, and on what else is being used, while Dr Patrick Bowler says the only person who should be permitted close to your face with a needle, for Botox or otherwise, is someone who is medically trained and licensed.

“Those Botox parties you hear about - they definitely happen,” he says. “But are they legal? No. Allow nobody to administer Botox or other injectables but a doctor or nurse trained in the procedure concerned.”