

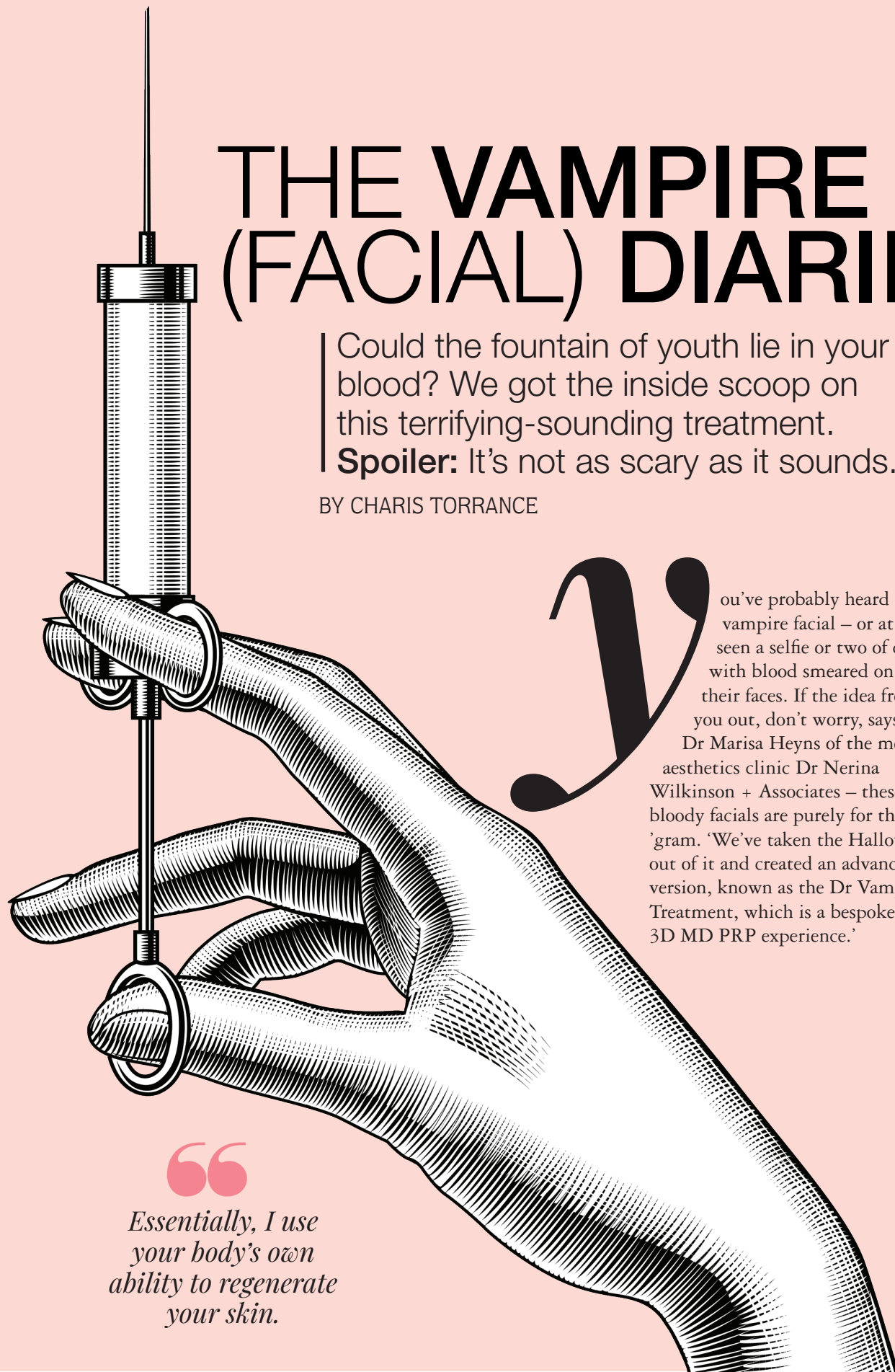
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THE VAMPIRE (FACIAL) DIARIES

Could the fountain of youth lie in your blood? We got the inside scoop on this terrifying-sounding treatment.

Spoiler: It's not as scary as it sounds.

BY CHARIS TORRANCE



You've probably heard of the vampire facial – or at least seen a selfie or two of celebs with blood smeared on their faces. If the idea freaks you out, don't worry, says Dr Marisa Heyns of the medical aesthetics clinic Dr Nerina Wilkinson + Associates – these bloody facials are purely for the 'gram. 'We've taken the Halloween out of it and created an advanced version, known as the Dr Vampire Treatment, which is a bespoke 3D MD PRP experience.'

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Essentially, I use your body's own ability to regenerate your skin.



Dr Marisa Heyns of the medical aesthetics clinic Dr Nerina Wilkinson + Associates

What is PRP?

Short for platelet-rich plasma, PRP is derived from the patient's own blood. Blood is made up of various components, including red blood cells, white blood cells and plasma. Plasma, the liquid component, contains platelets that are rich in growth factors.

'Essentially, I use your body's own ability to regenerate your skin,' Dr Heyns says.

Our skin is one of those amazing organs that has the intelligence to look after itself.

'How it works is that there are cells called fibroblasts in the dermis that make collagen, hyaluronic acid and elastin, and they keep the dermis functioning healthily and keep it looking plump and wrinkle-free. But, as we get older, we lose that ability.'

Luckily, growth factors have the ability to activate those fibroblasts – and they're right there in your own blood.

The history of PRP can be traced back to the 1970s, when it was first used in maxillofacial and orthopaedic surgery to aid in tissue repair and to speed up healing. The initial focus of PRP

was primarily on its ability to stimulate bone healing and enhance the success rate of bone grafts. Over time, researchers explored its potential in other areas, including dermatology and aesthetic medicine.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, PRP started gaining attention as a promising treatment for skin rejuvenation. The discovery that platelets contain a high concentration of growth factors sparked interest in using PRP for cosmetic purposes – and so the vampire facial was born.



Platelet-rich plasma comes from your own drawn blood; it is spun out in a centrifuge and then used for the Dr Vampire Treatment.

Why do it?

The 3D MD PRP Facial tackles a variety of skin concerns, including:

1 Sun-damaged skin: Rejuvenates and repairs skin damaged by prolonged sun exposure.

2 Textural damage with dull or dry skin: Restores skin texture, promoting a smoother and more vibrant complexion.

3 Fine lines and wrinkles: Stimulates collagen production, reducing the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

4 Thinning hair: Addresses hair loss concerns by nourishing the scalp and promoting hair growth.

5 Pigmentation: Helps even out skin tone by reducing the appearance of dark marks and discoloration.

6 Dehydrated skin: Provides essential hydration, combating dryness and maintaining suppleness.

7 Scarring: Diminishes the appearance of scars and lesions.

8 Lack of skin radiance: Restores a youthful glow to the skin.

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Although it's commonly known as a facial treatment, PRP injections can also be performed on other areas of the body, including the scalp (for thinning hair), neck, hands and décolleté, and on scars. And PRP treatments can be utilised for the O-Shot, a rejuvenating treatment for vaginal tissue.

Keep in mind that not everyone is a suitable candidate for PRP. Avoid a PRP treatment if you're suffering from an autoimmune disease, diabetes, low platelet count, keloidosis or cancer, or you are pregnant, have an open wound with an infection or are on anticoagulants.

The side-effects of a PRP treatment include swelling, redness and bruising, but these should settle within 24 hours. If you're prone to fever blisters, let them know beforehand – because of inflammation in the skin, the skin needling may cause a flare-up. Rare adverse effects include severe post-treatment erythema, sterile pustules, post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, severe skin peeling and crusting.

The consultation

Before you plunge in face first, you need to undergo a consultation. Here, you'll have your photo taken from every angle inside the Next Motion Photo Lab. The computerised VISIA Skin Analysis will then measure and map your skin before a skincare specialist breaks down the findings, highlights specific concerns and puts together a treatment plan.

Bernice politely told me that my skin age was 38, which should have come as a shock; I'm only 35. Then again, I also have a 6-month-old at home, and I couldn't remember the last time I'd had a decent

night's sleep or remembered to drink a glass of water, so it wasn't entirely unexpected. My biggest concerns were inflammation, which causes redness, enlarged pores and pigmentation. The good news for me was that this treatment could assist with all three. It improves hydration, pigmentation and skin tone, and stimulates collagen to refine enlarged pores.

Step one *Blood collection*

The first step is to draw some blood, just like you would for a routine blood test. Using your own blood ensures that there is no risk of contamination or danger of transmissible diseases. If you are skittish about blood and needles, they do offer some medicinal aides to calm your nerves. Your blood is mixed with a sterile blood-thinning ingredient called sodium citrate to prevent it from clotting.

The blood is then spun to separate the red blood cells from the platelet-containing plasma. 'The blood is placed in a centrifuge, which separates the heavy particles from the lighter particles so your red blood cells accumulate at the bottom and the plasma at the top,' Dr Heyns says. 'It is then spun again to pull out the platelets from the plasma.'



The centrifuge that's used to separate the different components of blood to obtain platelet-rich plasma (PRP)



Step two *Injections*

Some clinics apply the plasma to the outermost layer of the skin and then attempt to infuse the liquid into the deeper layers of the skin with a microneedling device. The problem is you cannot guarantee the plasma is going where it is meant to go so it can activate the fibroblasts.

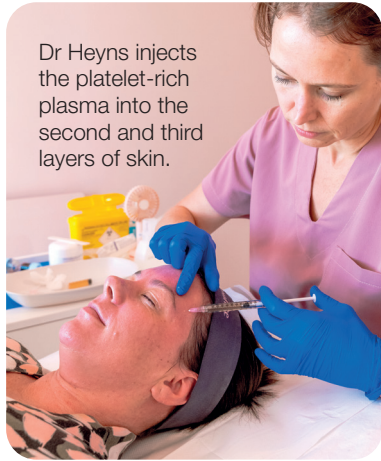
Once my face was numb (you can opt for a painkiller), Dr Heyns used fine needles to inject the platelet-rich plasma into the second and third layers of my skin. I won't lie; it was uncomfortable. But it was over fairly quickly. She then used microneedling to infuse the platelet-poor plasma, which is rich in antioxidants, into the epidermal layer of my skin.

'Not only are we activating dermal fibroblasts, but we are also delivering growth factors to the stem cells in the epidermis,' she says. 'You end up with double the goodness and maximised results!'



You'll only really start to see the effects six weeks after the treatment.

Dr Heyns injects the platelet-rich plasma into the second and third layers of skin.



Dr Heyns uses micro-needling to infuse the platelet-poor plasma into the skin's epidermal layer.



Step three

Relax

Once that's over, it's time for the fun part: you get to relax! An ultra-moisturising phospholipid solution is applied to your skin and an iontophoresis mask placed on your face. Cue the calming music. You'd think after all those injections I would be wound up tighter than a rubber band, but pretty soon I was fast asleep. (This may or may not have been related to my lack of sleep – either way, I was grateful for the chance to have a nap.)

Results

The 3D MD PRP Facial took 2 hours, and I was sent home with a few samples for my at-home treatment: NeoStrata Restore Facial Cleanser, Matriskin CR/7 Restorative Remedy Cream, and Heliocare 360° Oil-Free Gel SPF 50 Sunscreen. 'The process doesn't happen overnight. Even though you'll leave with your skin feeling tighter, you'll only really start to see the effects six weeks after the treatment,' Dr Heyns told me. For the next 24 hours, my face felt a little bruised and sensitive, as expected. A month after the treatment, my skin feels softer and more hydrated, and there is visibly less redness. And it's still getting better. You can expect optimal results in three months, and the effects should last for about a year. ❖

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Duration: 2 hours **Price:** From R7900

PHOTOGRAPHS: GALLO IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; LIZA VAN DEVENTER

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