

Saving FACE

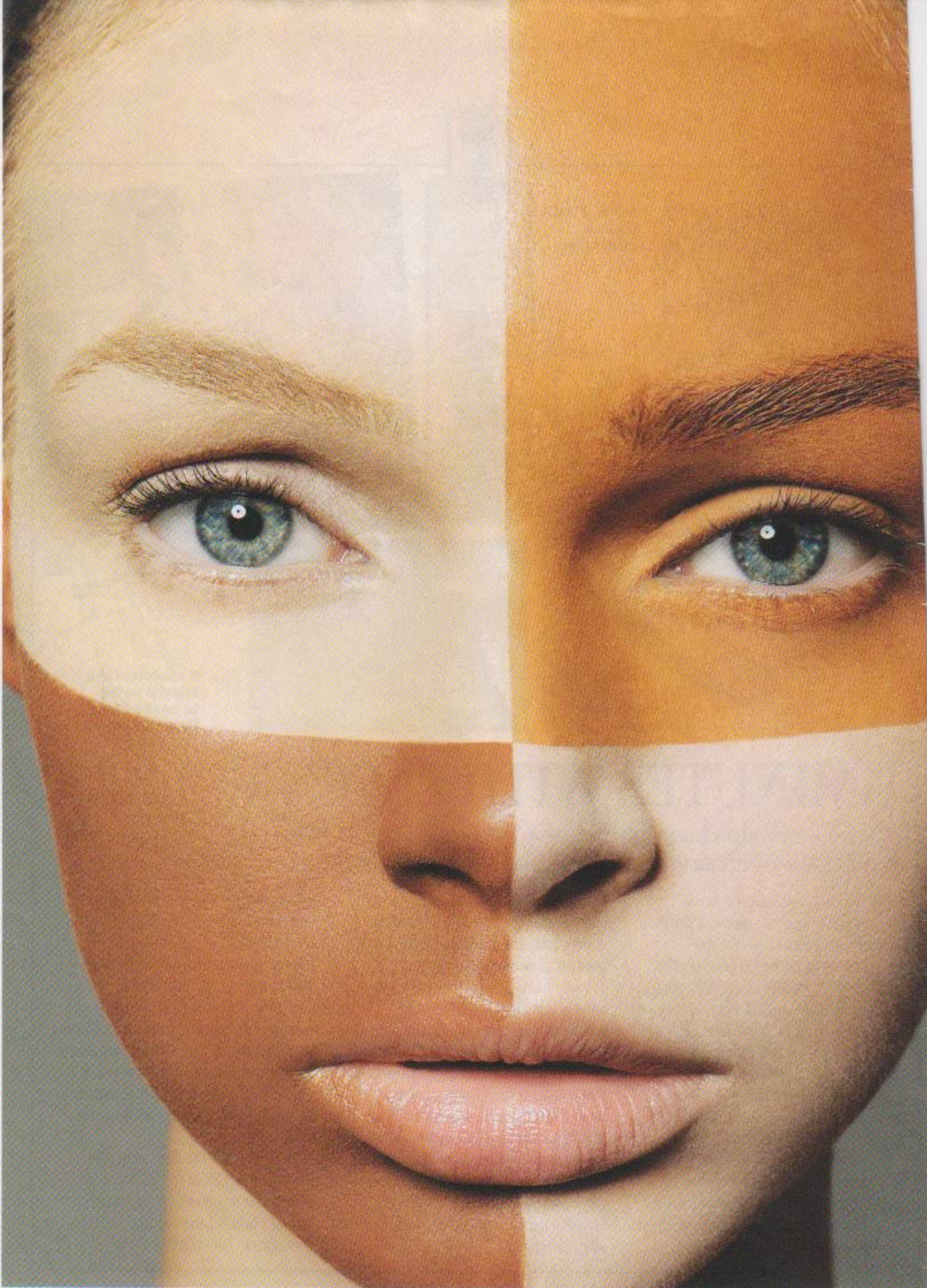
When the hottest must-have is a Snow White mien, the biggest statement of the season is picture-perfect skin. Alli Sim braves a red face for Beverly Hills' best-kept aesthetic secret, Cosmelan.

Skin that's too good to be true. Healthy, radiant, ad campaign, girl-next-door skin. Throughout Singapore, well-heeled society women and in-the-know hipsters are renouncing their sun-worshipping ways for a reformed life of luminous, foundation-free skin.

Relatively new to our shores, the two-step mask Cosmelan was created by Mesoesthetic Skin Laboratories in Spain and acts like a magic reset button in eliminating pigmentation and the effects of acne-prone skin.

"Cosmelan does more than help freckles or blemished skin — it assists in the texture as well as the pore size," says Point Medical's aesthetic specialist, Dr Z-Teo. "It improves pigmentation by 50 to 90 percent and is a one-off treatment that yields great results."

Respected anti-ageing specialist and one of Singapore's first doctors to use Cosmelan two years ago, Dr Wong Yoke Meng of Clinique Suisse says, "Unlike IPL, Vaser Lasers and other depigmentation treatments, Cosmelan has multiple actions, the most obvious of which is colour. Rather than having patches of pigment, skin tone is completely evened out," he says. "It has quality ingredients, suppressing on a cellular level the production of pigment without using banned substances like hydroquinone, so there are no harmful side effects. Thirdly, it tightens the face because it gets rid of all the dead cells and the new surface grows with minimal downtime." I gamely give it a go.



DAY ONE THE C WORD

10:40am After having my skin assessed, a preliminary cleansing of the face occurs twice with the Degreasing Solution to remove any impurities such as dirt and sebum. Made from water and acetone, it's almost as good as putting nail varnish remover on your skin. A minimal biting sensation follows.

11am Cosmelan is applied directly to the skin. For a treatment that promises big results, it just feels like spreading peanut butter on the skin rather than a treatment that completely revitalises the appearance. The ingredients, according to Dr Z-Teo, act to inhibit the tyrosinase enzyme that stimulates melanin in the skin, commonly spurred on by sun exposure and dalliances with oral contraceptives. Active whitening ingredients of kojic and ascorbic acids act as a shield, blocking and gently reversing the metabolic process of dark spots.

That means no stinging or heat-like sensation.

12pm My eyes are starting to water as my skin begins to excrete an olive oil-type fluid.

5pm I gently rinse the mask off with the only discomfort being a kind of "heat", as if I had been walking in the sun. Apply the prescribed toner, followed by a light mask-like application of Cosmelan 2, an at-home treatment created to complement the process started by the initial mask. It also aids in regulating the secretion of the skin's own oils.

"Cosmelan 2 continues to de-pigment the skin. The pigmentation continues to lighten, and the texture of pores continue to improve," says Dr Z-Teo. Designed to restore to your skin what the initial peel removed, an application of the super-moisturising Hydra Vital Factor K Cream follows. Enriched with hyaluronic acid, vitamin E and bio-mineral salts, the cream cools the skin down, allowing for greater comfort and elasticity.

DAY TWO RED OR DEAD

Hollywood's cult dermatologist, Dr Norman Leaf of Leaf & Rusher Medical Skincare Clinic in Beverly Hills, lists Cosmelan as one of the clinic's hottest party-preppers for any A-lister during red-carpet season. Red, flaky skin for anywhere from five days to three weeks after the treatment is a good sign of the skin regenerating itself. Since I look about as famous as an extra from *Attack of the Cheese Graters*, a big sun hat and oversize Chanel sunglasses will have to do as I go out and about. Am practically bathing myself in Hydra Vital Factor K or Special K cream, as I call it, and a liberal layer of La-Roche Posay's Anthelios XL SPF50+ sunscreen glazes the top of my skin. Dr Z-Teo recommends using the toner before Cosmelan 2 and K cream to aid in healing.

DAY THREE THE REAL PEEL DEAL

With my epidermis dried out, an accelerated exfoliation from the sunburn-like effects of the treatment begins. "There is some peeling, but it's not so severe that you can't go out," says Dr Wong.

Dr Z-Teo says that while this form of exfoliation varies with each person, the majority will undergo a socially accepted form of peeling for the first three to five days. "This is a safe procedure because it's non-invasive and there's no bleeding as the ingredients are of the highest quality," he assures. Four thousand successfully treated cases and 1,800 in the past year can't be wrong.

SPF/UV radiation paranoia strikes, and I vigilantly spray Clarins' Anti-Electromagnetic Waves & Urban Pollution not on my face as directed, but on my computer screen. In addition to applying SPF to bed and upping my H2O intake to more than 2 litres to facilitate cell recovery, this is as crazy — no, *enthusiastic*, as I get. Doctors recommend keeping refrigerated sanitary pads soaked in chamomile tea to soothe and calm the skin. Not something I can see Cosmelan-transformed *Desperate Housewife* Marcia Cross doing, but then again, no pain, no gain.

DAY FOUR LOSING FACE IN BALI...

I, minus a layer of skin, am posted to sunny Bali for work. The curtains in my villa are drawn, with only a sliver of glorious sunshine coming through. Extreme, yes, but that's all the sun I'll allow myself for now. While levels of skin reactivity differ in every person (some patients report near-complete healing by five days), my sensitive skin, though not completely rejuvenated, is calming down.

Flawless in a Flash: Cosmelan

WHAT IT IS A mask that safely removes uneven pigmentation, dark spots, blemishes and even acne scars.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE Six to seven hours,

depending on the level of blemishes or intensity of skin pigmentation.

THE AFTER-CARE Patients need to be diligent with after-care. Cosmelan 2 and Hydra Vital Factor K cream must be used. And, to prevent a new outbreak of melasma or dark spots, religious sunblock use for both indoors and outdoors is imperative.

BEST FOR Acne-prone skins or patients with facial stains such as freckles and dark spots related to sun exposure or changes in

hormone levels caused by age and even pregnancy. In addition to the face, patients with hyperpigmentation on the hands, abdomen, legs and even nipples are good candidates for Cosmelan.

COSMETIC MUST-HAVES

Try these wonderful post-treatment skin soothers: Replenishing Foaming Cleanser, Jurlique; True Match Minerals Make-Up, L'Oréal; Anti-Electromagnetic Waves & Urban Pollution Screen Mist, Clarins; Sport Foundation, Make Up Store; UVIDEA XL SPF 50 Sunscreen, La Roche-Posay

Soothing post-treatment skin solutions



DAY EIGHT ...AND INTO TOKYO AND SEOUL

Some are ready to face the world again with a sheer slick of foundation, but I decide against it. This is a time for healing, not camouflaging. The inflammation has decreased significantly, but due to dehydrating airplane cabin air, I'm starting to run out of Special K cream. Get a new tube FedEx-ed from Singapore. High maintenance — who, me?

Cosmelan 2 and the K cream must be used in conjunction with each other twice daily for a period of two weeks (your doctor should advise you according to the nature of your skin).

WEEK TWO THE TRANSFORMATION BEGINS

Before I start losing faith, something amazing happens. The tri-weekly application of Cosmelan 2 serves to stimulate the skin, acting as a mini-exfoliator as it sloughs dead skin away. My forehead, once characterised by little bumps, is completely baby smooth as my colleagues ooh and ahh at the progress. My cheeks are flushed with a healthy glow as the dull skin tone caused by bad skin circulation, fluctuating hormones and blemishes seem like a bad dream.

These new changes are causing me to re-evaluate my beauty routine. Despite deep cleansing, my face is never taut and after the application of SPF 50+, I feel no need to blot excess sebum mid-day. And, for the first time ever, my skin is good enough to face the world in nothing but mascara and gloss. The concept of foundation-free skin is liberating.

WEEK THREE AFTER-CARE

It's important throughout the year-long maintenance process to continue combined use of Cosmelan 2 with Hydra Vital Factor K at night. Your own skincare may be applied on the days where Cosmelan 2 isn't in use.

WEEK FOUR GOING FOR GLOW

Skin luminosity is completely recovered and I'm back to me, only better. I've done away with foundations altogether, adding only the slightest hint of blush and highlighter to sculpt my cheekbones.

Dr Wong takes a holistic approach to after-care. "I always tell my clients that in order to have beautiful skin you need to maintain good health. After-care always comes with detox, a well-balanced diet, sufficient hydration and special skin antioxidants and colonic irrigation. Avoid sun for the first two weeks."

"Patients can't believe it's a one-off treatment. You have to educate them that it really is a one-off treatment for pigmentation," says Dr Z-Teo. The only thing you're in danger of, it seems, is too much of this good thing. ■

LITTLE BLACK BOOK

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