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Everything You Need to Know About Gua Sha Benefits



I'm always looking for a facial treatment that will give me jaw-dropping results — without an equally shocking price tag. That's where a buzzy treatment Gua Sha comes in. Gua Sha, also known as "coining," is derived from traditional Chinese medicine, and it might be one of the more affordable facial treatments you can buy. Here's everything we know about it, a dermatologist's thoughts, and a little about my own experience getting a Gua Sha facial.

What is Gua Sha?

“‘Gua’ means scrape, and ‘Sha’ means sand,” explains Dr. Sheel Desai Solomon, a board-certified Raleigh-Durham North Carolina dermatologist. “It’s a treatment that involves scraping a flat jade or rose quartz stone over the skin in upward strokes to relax stiff muscles and promote tissue drainage.”

The treatment is traditionally used in East Asian and Chinese medicine. Some might be familiar with the Gua Sha massage, which treats muscle pain and tight muscles by applying pressure with the Gua Sha tool. The results don’t exactly look pretty, as you can end up with redness and bruising as you heal. However, the results are dramatic, and some have called it the best massage of their life.

There’s also the newer trend of the facial Gua Sha treatment, which uses a similar technique. And while it’s been used for thousands of years, it’s blowing up on Instagram this year as an aesthetic treatment to improve the look and feel of your skin.

What are Gua Sha’s benefits?

There are claims that Gua Sha can help migraines and neck pains, among other symptoms. From Dr. Solomon’s experience, the facial Gua Sha treatment has a variety of benefits.

“Just as our bodies experience stress in the form of shoulders hunched over a computer, or headaches from tension, our faces hold stress in the form of furrowed brows or clenched jaws,” says Dr. Solomon. “Facial Gua Sha is a massage technique designed to relieve tension in the muscles of the face, boost blood circulation, and encourage lymphatic drainage to banish bloat. It helps break up fascia, the connective tissue that hugs muscles but can sometimes interfere with optimal circulation.”

That being said, Dr. Solomon says Gua Sha benefits haven’t been clinically studied, and she doesn’t perform the treatment in her practice. However, she says people report that their skin looks smoother and lifted after one session. And with frequent repetition, this can become part of your comprehensive skin routine.

Okay, and what are Gua Sha tools exactly?

This might sound like another popular trend: The jade roller. But there are significant differences, says Dr. Solomon, who suggests you trust a professional to perform the treatment for you. Performing the treatment on your own face and neck could potentially result in bruising or bursting capillaries, so it's best to leave things to the experts.

With that being said, there are Gua Sha tools available online for those with experience using them, and you can check them out below:

I am a total Gua Sha newbie, and only heard about it when I saw an advertisement for Heyday Skincare's new "enhancement." For an additional \$20, I decided to add the treatment to my facial because of the alleged amazing benefits, like preventing and treating saggy skin, brightening complexion, and healing dark circles, rosacea, and scarring. My Heyday "Skin Therapist" walked me through the process, and proceeded to put carotene oil on my face before applying a jade Gua Sha tool. She gently put pressure onto my skin as she moved it from my face and down my neck. Unlike some of the shocking photos from a Gua Sha massage (I'm sure some facial and skin massages are more intense), this iteration was far from painful and didn't leave any marks. My skin felt tighter and smoother for the next few days, and I am already preparing for my next Gua Sha treatment.

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