



RED LED DEVICES  
ONLY LOOK HOT.  
THEY EMIT COOL  
LIGHT THAT'S  
CALMING TO SKIN.

### The Wrinkle Eraser

Unlike other at-home anti-aging lasers (which tend to be for skin around the eyes or lips), the Tria Age-Defying Laser works on the entire face. "It uses the same wavelength as some professional lasers, but at energy levels that can't damage skin," says Roy Geronemus, a dermatologist in New York City. That means the Tria takes longer to yield results. In clinical studies, subjects used it five days a week for three months. "Three months later, about 75 percent had a statistically significant improvement in wrinkles and brown spots," says Brian Biesman, an oculoplastic surgeon in Nashville who conducted some of the trials. Our tester was impressed, though she wouldn't call this an easy fix: After three months of three five-minute skin-stinging sessions a week, her lines had diminished enough to make her look years younger. Her skin felt sunburned for about an hour after each use, but the laser didn't actually make her sensitive skin look red.

### The Zit Zapper

Light-therapy devices use LEDs, very specific wavelengths of light, and "most claim to treat acne with blue LEDs or wrinkles with red ones," says Howard Sobel, a dermatologist in New York City. Dermatologists have used blue lights to kill acne-causing bacteria for years, "but even medical-grade red lights may not drastically improve wrinkles; they're best for calming inflammation." That's why we like the Baby Quasar Clear Rayz: "The red and blue lights will heal breakouts in a few days, calm redness in the meantime, and prevent acne from leaving dark spots behind," says Fredric Brandt, a dermatologist in New York City and Miami. Just three sessions cleared up our tester's painful hormonal breakouts. And after a few weeks of use, her skin remained even. But then reality set in: With each session taking her at least ten minutes, she cut back to once a week. Now she uses it to shrink new zits, instead of more often to prevent them.



cleansing brushes and then more-advanced gizmos, like the ones from No!No! for zapping hairs and those from Tanda, which use red or blue LEDs to target wrinkles or acne, respectively. Sales in the United States of at-home beauty gadgets were up 11 percent in 2013, according to Kline & Company, a market-research firm. That's notable, but even more startling are the figures in China, where sales rose more than 92 percent last year. In one recent survey, 60 percent of Chinese women said they own at least one beauty device.

**W**hat happened? Did all of China have a massive zit attack or suddenly become superhairy? Unclear. But what is apparent is that the entire globe is adopting my basic life philosophy: When at all possible, do not leave the house.

"Yes, it's about convenience, partially," agrees Debra Redmond, Nordstrom's national beauty and fragrance director. "Women don't have time, and they want the benefits they would see at a spa or dermatologist's office at a more affordable price." And that's another reason for the recent popularity of these devices: They have very real benefits. "There is more efficacy with the newest at-home devices than there used to be," says dermatologist Ava Shamban, the author of *Heal Your Skin* (Wiley). "The best ones, like the Tria Age-Defying Laser, have strong clinicals backing them up."

Another factor? Shrinkage (of the good variety). Just as computers used to be the size of an entire room and now we can hold them in our hand, so it is that a laser at a dermatologist's office used to be the size of a deep freezer and now sits neatly on a tiny tabletop; the home devices, of course, are even smaller than that. The Baby Quasar MD Blue for treating acne looks like a cross between a reflex hammer and Frosty's pipe. The Foreo Luna cleansing gadget sits in the palm of your hand. They are portable; they can travel with you. Of course, this also has its disadvantages. "Most of these devices are meant for small areas—they're tiny. So you won't be treating your entire body, unless you lock yourself in your house for 12 months and get really busy," says Shamban.

There is also this caveat: In order to be idiot-proof, home devices aren't as strong as the versions in an aesthetician's or doctor's office. "This is what people don't understand about the FDA when they approve a device for home use," says dermatologist Roy Geronemus, the director of the Laser & Skin Surgery Center of New York. "The FDA's main question is not 'Does this work?' but 'Does it harm you?' If it doesn't harm you, then it's less important to the FDA whether it offers much benefit." Translation: Not every device lives up to its hype. And even with those that do, while you may be saving time and money by not going to the dermatologist, you will be spending time (and for many, time is money) doing more treatments.

Even given their limitations, these are not the 1960s Relax-a-Cizor, where you would strap on wet pads and electrodes to shock yourself into thinness. (Doesn't that sound relaxing?) Many of these new devices really do work.

As for my NuFace firming adventures, I know there is a difference immediately after the treatment: My skin seems a bit more taut for about a day. A friend recently gave me another NuFace as a gift, and I've got it packed and ready for Anderson. I've even thrown in the optional eye and lip attachment. All he has to do is call.

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## Hairless Wonder

They promised that you'd never have to shave or wax again—with no ingrowns, no bumps, and no stubble. That's why laser hair-removal gadgets were the first of the at-home devices that anyone really got excited about. But then there was the sad reality: They took forever to work and delivered only so-so results. Now there's a new generation that claims to be better. Dermatologists say the Tria Hair Removal Laser, which uses a diode laser, has the most science behind it. Like professional lasers, it works only on dark hair and fair skin, and it can take months to yield results. "It damages stem cells in the hair follicle," says Neil Sadick, a dermatologist in New York City. "It slowly thins out hair. You may or may not ever achieve total hairlessness." Thin skin—above the lip, in the armpits, and along the bikini line—tends to get smoothest, fastest, says Sadick. Our tester used the Tria once every two weeks for three months before her armpits were hairless, and each session *hurt* (it feels like a rubber band snapping against your skin). She now does touch-ups every month or so. (Each underarm takes about five minutes. If you want to tackle your legs, count on about an hour each.)

THE NUMBER AND POPULARITY OF AT-HOME DEVICES HAS EXPLODED OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS: "MORE OF MY PATIENTS ARE ASKING ABOUT THEM, AND SOME OF THE NEWEST TOOLS ARE LEGIT," SAYS GERONEMUS.