

TRIED & TESTED: HIGH TECH BEAUTY

THE LAST TIME I used a power tool, I took out half of my bathroom wall trying to put in a simple screw. In beauty as in life, I'm a big believer in calling in the pros. But this season, high-tech beauty is going DIY with a slew of new home gadgets that promises everything from ageless skin to hairless legs. The lure of professional results without having to wait for an appointment—or pay the hefty prices at salons and doctor's offices—is tempting even for someone who hates to read instruction booklets.

First up: a thorough assessment. The Simplehuman Sensor Mirror (\$200) has a surgical-grade LED light ring and magnifies your face five times. This mirror would give Narcissus heart palpitations. I stare with fascination and despair at my skin in all its sun-damaged, unevenly tweezed, porous (non)glory. After the initial shock I go running for help.

Enter the Riiviva Microderm (\$299). The first at-home microderm-abrasion tool with a medical-grade diamond tip, it promises to slough off dead skin cells, lessen brown spots, and boost collagen production—all in just one five-minute treatment per week. Holding my skin taut, I pass the rotating tip over my face. While it's painless, the loud buzzing and suction is not unlike running a vacuum cleaner across your face. (The Riiviva includes a filter to catch the particles.) But after two treatments my skin is noticeably clearer. Jordana Mattioli, star facialist in plastic surgeon Adam Kolker's office on New York's Park Avenue, confirms the benefits: "You can absolutely get similar results at home, and I love that the Riiviva has different tips and intensities. But don't overdo it. I wouldn't recommend this device for conditions like active acne, sensitive skin, or rosacea."

For acne, there is the Tanda Zap Power (\$80), which uses blue light LEDs to kill the bacteria that causes pimples. You simply hold the small wand against the dreaded spot for two minutes (there's a slight warming sensation), three times a day. The Tanda promises results in 24 hours, without the drying that can come with topical treatments. Many dermatologists use similar blue light therapies to treat acne, but, as Fredric Brandt, the celeb dermatologist with offices in New York and Miami, points out, "in-office treatments are much stronger and deliver light to the entire face, not just one small area, so they prevent future breakouts as well." Still, for quick spot removal, the Tanda makes sense.

To treat dark circles and lines (undoubtedly caused by trying to figure out how to use all these gadgets), I turn to the JeNu Active-Youth Skincare System (\$249). After patting on an under-eye cream containing vitamins A and C, hyaluronic acid, and microspheres, I run the ultrasound wand in circles for one minute under each eye. According to JeNu, the ultrasound waves activate the microspheres in the eye cream to

deliver 12 times more active antiaging ingredients than the topical cream alone would. Results can take a few weeks, but I noticed immediate hydration and plumping (along with a mild tingling). Though increasing the effectiveness of topical treatments is a hot topic in dermatologic circles, Robert Anolik of the Laser & Skin Surgery Center of New York says, "This sounds enticing, but there hasn't been significant evidence yet that it works."

Even teeth are not exempt from Beauty 2.0. The Pearl Brilliant White Ionic Teeth Whitening System (\$195), the first at-home whitening technology

to be cleared by the FDA in nearly a decade, claims to make your teeth up to 10 shades whiter in five days. The device uses microcurrents to activate the (very gooey) hydrogen peroxide gel in a soft mouth tray. Unlike most whitening strips, it requires only five minutes per use. The ionic part is something of an act of faith, however—you can't see, feel, or hear it. Marc Lowenberg, a cosmetic dentist in New York who tends the teeth of Renée Zellweger and Julianna Margulies, is skeptical of the technology. "The universal tray is not form-fitted the way it would be in a dentist's office," he explains. "Some people will get good results and some won't." Still, after five days, my gums are a bit sore, but my teeth are whiter.

For below the neck, the Me Smooth Hair Removal System (\$395) is the only at-home hair-removal device that has received FDA clearance for all skin tones. It uses intense pulsed light with radio frequency energy to target hair follicles and deliver heat to inhibit growth. According to the manufacturer's clinical trials, there was 46 percent average hair reduction after two once-a-week treatments, and up to 94 percent reduction after seven weekly treatments. Unfortunately, I neglected to read the instructions, letting the hair on my legs grow for a week before realizing that shaving is the first step. After correcting my mistake I glide the machine over my skin as a red light pulses every couple of seconds. The heat is totally bearable, and at least I can watch Netflix while I beautify. Three weeks later I'm not about to throw out my razor, but I definitely need it less often.

There is one last gadget to try: the Panasonic Heated Eyelash Curler (\$40). I will admit—I'm highly skeptical. If nothing else, placing a hot rotating wand anywhere near my eyes doesn't seem like the brightest idea. (Even I read the directions on this one.) While the machine heats up, I put on mascara, then move the small rotating comb up from the base of my lashes. In the interest of research, I do just my right eye and go to my frenemy, the Simplehuman mirror. To my surprise, my lashes do look thicker and, well, curlier. I go back, do the other eye, turn the mirror to face the wall, and head out into the world. ■

New at-home gadgets claim you are only a battery charge away from a younger-looking you. Emily Dudding investigates.

