



Style | Wellbeing | Celebrity *Trends*



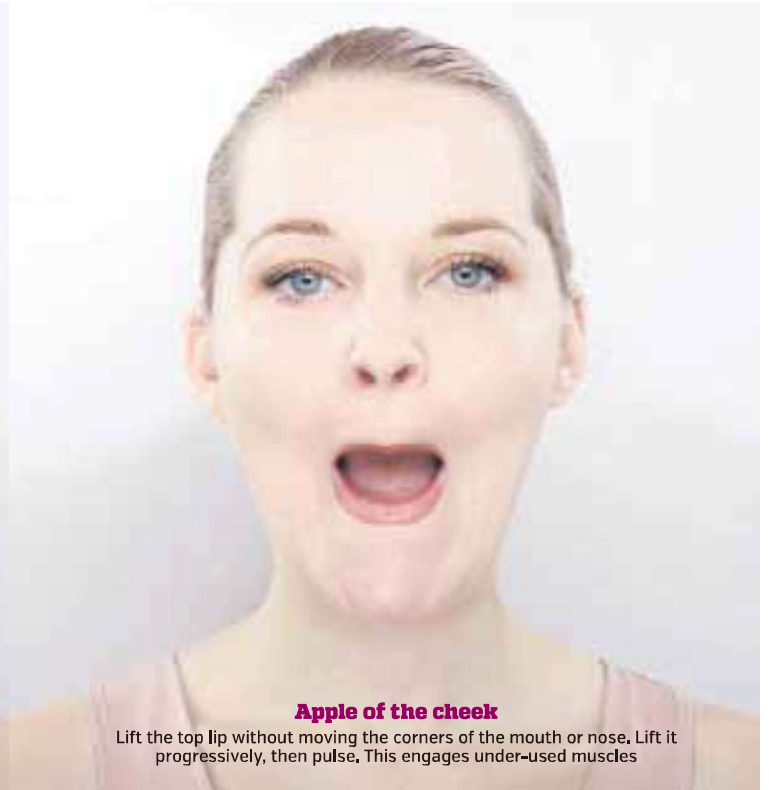
COLDFRONT
**Help! My partner
has stopped
wanting sex**

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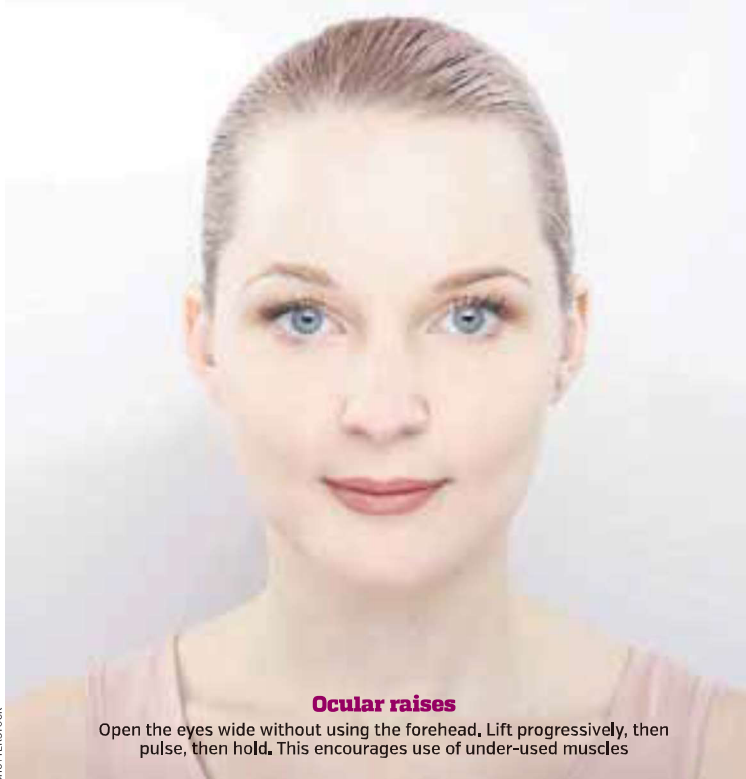
The face plank (for the face 'core')

Curl the lips in. Open into an O. Suck in the corner of the cheeks. Lift the apple of the cheeks. Open the eyes wide and lift the chin so everything is engaged



Apple of the cheek

Lift the top lip without moving the corners of the mouth or nose. Lift it progressively, then pulse. This engages under-used muscles



Ocular raises

Open the eyes wide without using the forehead. Lift progressively, then pulse, then hold. This encourages use of under-used muscles

CAN YOU HOLD A **FACE** PLANK?

Pilates applies to the neck up, too. **Helen Croydon** attempts a face workout that could be the key to staying young

SITTING ON a stool, staring into a mirror, I try to look surprised without moving my forehead. And relax. And be surprised again. A few reps of those and it's on to the zygomaticus minor. I curl my lips into an O, suck in my cheeks and try to lift the apple of my cheeks without engaging my jaw. Pulse. Hold.
If you couldn't resist following suit, congratulations (especially if you're on the train) – you've just done your first facial Pilates, which may be the most anti-ageing

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The cheeky drills that defy ageing

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thing you do all day. That's according to Carme Farre, who has used her expertise as a Pilates instructor to create workouts for the neck up. Ten minutes a day for four weeks is all you need to feel the effects.

'People spend hours in the gym working out their body but they forget about the face,' she says. 'Skincare is important but creams and exfoliating only target the top layer of the face. Definition and volume comes from muscles and ligaments. Think about the arms and legs. If you stop working out they will sag and lose shape. You wouldn't put moisturiser on your arms and expect them not to sag. It's the same with the face.'

Carme is a convincing ambassador. A former investment banker from Spain, she retrained as a Pilates instructor a decade ago. Now 45, she could pass for 35. The concept of facial fitness has become popular in recent years but Carme is the first to apply Pilates. Key to her technique is muscle isolation. There are more than 60 muscles in our face and neck but we use only a fraction of them. It's the over-use of certain areas, like the forehead, which leads to lines.

Carme works with clients one-on-one to diagnose individual exercises. 'I connect with clients and help them become aware of the muscles they over-use. Then I get them to isolate primary movers. In the same way a

The exercises leave me looking like a hybrid of a startled rabbit and sulking toddler



Bit of a stretch: A gruelling 45-minute workout, aimed at keeping the skin nice and taut, is an effective Botox alternative



personal trainer will tell a client to engage their glutes when doing a squat and to minimise using the hamstrings.'

It is these isolation exercises that see me sitting in front of a mirror looking like a hybrid of startled rabbit and sulking toddler. The lines on my forehead are tell-tale signs – I'm an over-expressor. So I'm trying to turn off my corrugator supercilii (somewhere in my forehead) and only use my orbicularis oculi (somewhere around my eyes). Carme is behind me, checking my moves in the mirror.

A warning, if a HIIT class makes you scared of looking in a mirror after, facial Pilates could give you post-traumatic stress. I certainly don't foresee it being paired with speed dating any time soon.

The most important exercises are ones that target the apple of the cheeks (cheek bones). This is what Carme calls the 'core' of the face. 'It is the first area to sag because it loses volume. Working this is essential for a youthful and healthy look,' she says.

Some moves involve holding areas of the face to stop them engaging. Others require fingers in mouth (with gloves to stop slippage) to manipulate parts of the cheeks. At the end of the 45 minutes, my face ached.

Carme recommends four private sessions to equip you with the techniques to practise it on your own, for life. I've bought into the concept already. One session may not plump up my cheek apples, but it has made me aware of my over-active forehead and my left lip, which moves far more than my right. So if you notice a friend not moving their forehead much, it may not be Botox. They may just be doing their ocular raises.

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Navy embellished court shoes £35, marksandspencer.com



Pink satin courts £34.99, hm.com



Manolo Blahnik Lurum Crystal 90 mules, £895, Farfetch.com



Attico Julia contrast strap flats £710, matchesfashion.com