



# PULSE

Belinda (center) gets makeup tips from author Melissa Schweiger (right) and makeup artist Sara Biria.



**BEFORE**

**AFTER!**



By **MARINA VATAJ**  
**T**HINK spas are relaxing? You might not after reading this. "Spas — especially medical spas — are a booming industry, but what people don't know is that treatments leave

a lot of room for error," says **Cameron Rokhsar**, a dermatologic laser surgeon and assistant professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Here's what to keep in mind on your next pampering trip:  
**LASERS**  
■ Proper laser use must

## Suffering for beauty

### Popular spa treatments can be bad for health

correspond with skin tone and texture. Different lasers should be used for different procedures. Aestheticians often use one laser for all procedures and all patients, which can lead to infection and scars.  
**The solution:** Rokhsar suggests working with an experienced dermatologist who can create an individualized plan. "Go to a trained dermatologist who works with sterilized lasers and guarantees safe and effective results."

moved from injection site to the brain. Once in the brain, botulism can disrupt nerve cells and spinal cord circuitry.  
**The solution:** Steven Pearlman, New York facial plastic and reconstructive surgery specialist, suggests alternative, noninvasive products. "Facial Firming Therapy with polypeptides is the latest ingredient used in the most advanced anti-aging products to refinish, replenish and retexturize the skin." Similarly, he says Acetyl Hexapeptide-9 mimics the effects of Botox, "reducing facial tension and movement by paralyzing facial muscles."  
**BRAZILIAN HAIR TREATMENT**  
■ The treatment straightens hair with formaldehyde. According

to the International Agency for Research on Cancer, there is a relationship between formaldehyde and cancer, specifically leukemia and cancer that occurs behind the nose. Also, according to the Cosmetic Ingredient Review Expert Panel, a solution with 0.2 percent formaldehyde is considered safe, but salons use from 3.4 to 22.1 percent.  
**The solution:** A formaldehyde-free straightening treatment that has the same effects is Keratin Complex Hair Therapy, developed by stylist Peter Coppola. Smoothed instead with the vitamin keratin, "it reduces frizz and curl up to 95 percent and lasts up to three months," Coppola says.

**PEDICURES**  
■ Studies show getting your toes beautified can be risky. Most spas don't clean up between customers, and this means fungi often grow in tubs and on pedicure utensils. These fungi attach to the toenail and can cause infections of staph, Hepatitis C and mycobacteria, a bacteria that distort and discolor the nail and can be treated only with oral antibiotics.  
**The solution:** Stephen Comite, a board-certified dermatologist who has a private practice in Manhattan, recommends bringing your own instruments or checking to see if instruments are sterilized in autoclaves, which use heat to kill bacteria and prevent their growth.  
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