



## More Than Skin Deep

The quest for flawless skin tempts many to buy shelves of creams promising to turn back the clock. But Skin Therapy founder Rachel Robertson says a range of factors have to be considered when treating skin conditions, and “you don’t have to use 20 different products to get results.”



“Your epidermis, the top layer of your skin, is already dead. So you can’t just apply a product and expect to get results. You need to find out what your skin needs and learn how to look after it.”

Rachel started Skin Therapy in Tinakori Road in Thorndon in 2006 after returning home from the UK to open her own business offering advanced skin care. Her skin renewal treatments aim to get to the root of problems.

“It’s not about masking the symptoms on the surface. I found that there was nothing in Wellington between beauty therapy and advanced plastic and cosmetic surgeons. I wanted to provide somewhere where people could go to get results without having to go to more invasive methods like injectables.”

Her approach starts with a one and a quarter hour consultation with clients. “We build up a comprehensive picture of what is happening with their skin. We discuss lifestyle, nutrition, exercise, health history, previous skin care products used and previous treatment history.”

A skin scanner allows therapists to look past the epidermis into the underlying dermis. Digital skin analysis assesses skin hydration, lipid and melanin levels and how well capillaries are working. “Each layer of the skin is different. If damage is only at the epidermal level it’s not as severe as if the cells in the dermis have been damaged. We produce a picture of the face with a full visual and touch analysis drawing



on everything we see. Then we prescribe a home care course, treatment plan and nutrition plan.”

Clients are treated with Environ products, created by South African plastic surgeon Des Fernandes to combat skin damage. “There are no preservatives in them and he uses effective levels of Vitamin A and Vitamin C to increase and improve collagen and elastin production, to aid anti-aging and treat acne, acne scarring and pigmentation.”

Rachel says she uses an Environ Ionzyme DF machine to penetrate vitamins and serums into the skin with digital photos showing phenomenal results. “The DF machine produces sound waves to create channels in the skin and then magnetic vibration helps the vitamins penetrate through the channels. The vitamins penetrate 4000 times deeper than if they were applied topically. That means we are moisturising from the inside out.”

Rachel works in conjunction with a private dermatologist and says many people cannot believe the improvement in their skin over time. “I work with people with skin disorders like psoriasis, eczema, dermatitis, severe acne, pigmentation problems from pregnancy or severe exposure to the sun. A lot of conditions will never go away and if I had a cure for them I would be a multi-millionaire, but there’s a lot you can do to strengthen the structure of the skin cells and repair damage so when skin flares up, it’s less of a problem.”

For clients who are seeking a pampering facial,

Rachel uses Hema organic oils produced in Wellington by Margaret Hema. These products have become internationally recognised for their high levels of antioxidants, vitamins and essential fatty acids. “Margaret works with her intuition and her hands. All her oils are hand-blended and they are all organic. Oils are used to hydrate and nourish the skin while strengthening the connective tissue.”

Clients often remark on Rachel’s beautiful skin, but she says a long struggle with eczema prompted her to move into beauty therapy. “I’ve had eczema since I was a baby. It was really bad when I was about 17 to 20. I had quite big patches on my skin and I used to apply steroid creams and the skin would get really thin and bleed. Whenever clients comment on my skin, I always tell them that. I think it makes them feel more comfortable to know that I understand what it’s like to struggle with bad skin.”

After working at a big clinic in Wellington, Rachel landed a job managing 14 staff at Ark Spa, which had five branches throughout London. Then she established her own business in the UK working with private clients, including celebrities who she visited at home. “The majority of them were down to earth and relaxed, but it was a different world. It was really like being on call whenever they needed me.”

But celebrities or not, Rachel says the basic rules of skin care are the same for everyone. “It’s like brushing your teeth, you do that twice a day. To have good skin you have to look after it.”



She is an advocate of skin care with the right active ingredients – vitamins and anti-oxidants - and always broad spectrum sun protection. “Vitamin A is one of most important things. You need that to repair damaged cells which in turn produce more healthy skin cells. Vitamin C stimulates collagen production. There’s no point applying collagen on the outside, you want your body to produce its own. Some of the big cosmetic houses say they have Vitamin A in their products, but it might only be 0.02 international units when it takes 1000 international units to be effective.”

“Environ and Hema don’t bring out new products every month. Environ just brought out a new product that was

10 years in the making. The time and money has gone into research, rather than a huge marketing budget.”

Rachel backs up her conviction with training and research. Gaining her diploma in beauty therapy through the Beauty Therapy College of New Zealand in Auckland in 1999, she graduated top of her class. This year she was one of five therapists nominated for the New Zealand Therapist of the Year, for a 70 page entry looking at the treatment of two clients who suffer from acne, dermatitis and rosacea.

“One of my clients didn’t leave the house without make up for 20 years. Now she is quite comfortable going out with no make up on. She had actually forgotten how

bad her skin looked before she started therapy, until she saw the initial photos again.”

Rachel’s favourite skin belongs to her new baby India and she is working hard to keep everything natural for her four month old daughter. “Luckily, she inherited her dad Adam’s skin. We are very conscious of what we put on her skin, so she has full fabric nappies, no wipes, just water, no soap – she’s four months old and she hasn’t had any nappy rash. Her skin is just beautiful.”

**Skin Therapy**  
310 Tinakori Road, Thorndon, Wellington  
T. 04 473 7873  
[www.skintherapy.co.nz](http://www.skintherapy.co.nz)