

saks appeal

PIC: CHRIS NEELY



Saks Health and Beauty is based inside the imposing David Lloyd Club in Dundonald. Open to members and non-members alike, it offers a huge range of treatments and pamper packages. Beauty-wise it has everything covered; from facials, waxes, tints, massages, manicures and pedicures, through to collagenics, reiki, reflexology and teeth whitening. Some surprising services are offered, for example, food intolerance testing. Carried out by a nurse, this is a medical test which involves testing a sample of blood for any intolerance to about 100 different foods. There's even colour analysis available to help you choose the right colours to wear to suit your complexion and colouring!

I arrive on a Friday afternoon stressed, spotty and panicking about deadlines and I'm greeted by Sarah who soon calms me down with a cuppa and a chocolate. I like this place already. An Australian Bodycare half-leg wax was my first treat. I'm normally not a fan of waxes and only endure them in emergency situations, ie those which call for bikinis. I usually find them lengthy and somewhat eye-watering affairs, but my therapist Danielle assures me this is a whole new way to wax! I am intrigued and allowed myself to be led into one of the comfortable private treatment rooms. She explains that Australian Bodycare waxes are different in that, rather than heating a tub of wax and slopping it on to me with a spatula, the wax actually comes in tubes. She shows me the equipment and there, sure enough, are four little tubes, cooking nicely in their incubator. Once they are heated, she takes a tube, which has a nozzle on the end, and rolls the wax straight onto my leg from the tube. Because each client gets a fresh nozzle

there's no danger of cross-contamination with dead skin cells getting mixed up in the wax. I had never thought of that before. Yuck. I silently vow never to get a horrible, contaminated wax again. Danielle seems as surprised as I am that my relatively short hairs are being lifted so easily by the thin layer of wax applied to my leg. The wax seems to lift off very cleanly too, so in no time at all it's over. The tea-tree oil in the wax and in the balm applied afterwards smells gorgeous and serves to ward off that 'plucked chicken' look I'm normally left with. Even my grumbling about the epithelial eruptions on my chin is heeded and I'm given a blob of lovely tea-tree smelling goo to smear on my pustules to calm the redness. I don't hold out much hope but it does eventually soothe the throbbing and quells the redness a little.

I'm then offered the serious-sounding Oxygenator facial which, sadly, I'm just a little too time-pushed for on the day. No-needle oxygen injections push



specially formulated serums into the deeper layers of the skin which is meant to leave the skin looking plumper and younger whilst filling out fine lines and wrinkles. Inhalation of pure oxygen is included to "relax and refresh". All the girls at Saks swear by this treatment which is apparently beneficial to acne (sign me up please!), eczema and sun damage. It's not just a facial, either; the Oxygenator can also be used to treat skin on the décolleté and hands. After a quick demonstration of the machine in action, I'm shown into the Saks hair salon. Andrew Barton (whom you might recognise as the celebrity stylist on Channel 4's addictive *10 years Younger*) is the Saks international creative director. His art team train all the Saks stylists so I know I'm in capable hands here. My thick, waist-length hair has responded to the recent weather combination of sun and showers in its usual way. It's dry and frizzy, it's enormous and completely out of control. It's a hair monster which stylist Helen has the unenviable task of taming. But tame the beast she does, with a little help from L'Oréal and their Kerastase range of hair products, which she swears by. My hair is washed and conditioned and, after a gentle towel-dry, the Kerastase Relax serum is applied to my hair. "This stuff's amazing," Helen tells me, "It seems to just completely relax the hair and even seal in the split ends." Admittedly, I don't believe her; I've tried hundred of so-called wonder products to calm my unruly barnet and nothing really quite hits the mark - but I eat my silent words once she finishes blow-drying. My hair is positively gleaming and before a straightening iron so much as touches a cuticle, my hair is lying poker-straight, behaving itself. It even feels lighter! A far cry from the Heather of a couple of hours ago, I breeze out of Saks with smooth legs, silky hair and some less-angry-looking pimples!

I was heading to a party that night as well, so this trip ended up carving a good three hours off my getting-ready time. Also, as I write this, one party and two days later, my hair is *still* Avril-Lavigne-straight. I'm really starting to like this job!

Saks is located at the David Lloyd Club, Old Dundonald Road, Belfast BT16 1PX. Telephone 028 9048 7384 or visit www.belfast.saks.co.uk