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spa & beauty therapy in practice

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Laconium – a dry gentle sauna treatment originating in the spas of ancient Rome. It was and still is used as a pre heat treatment to gently open the pores in a temperature of around 65°C and a low humidity of around 15-20%.

Lactic acid – formed from glucose and used by muscles for energy

Lamella dystrophy – flaking, peeling and breaking of the nail plate, has many causes including; exposure to harsh chemicals, dietary deficiency, overuse of false nails, general ill health, immersing hands in water for long periods, incorrect filing, excessive buffing, neglect and using the nails as tools

Langerhans cells – found in the prickle cell layer of the epidermis these cells are responsible for initiating an immune response in the body to fight infection and destroy certain foreign substances.

Lanolin – comes from the sebaceous glands of sheep, it closely resembles the oil from human oil glands. It is an effective moisturising agent but with a reputation as a known allergen to some skins

Lanugo hair – a coat of delicate downy hairs covering the human foetus

Laser – Light Amplification Stimulated Emission Radiation, an increasingly popular specialised treatment, used to improve skin texture, reduce fine lines and wrinkles and reduce superfluous hair on the body and face. They are used by dermatologists for some skin conditions such as port wine stains, dilated blood vessels, birthmarks, tattoo, wart and skin tag removal.

Lateral – positioned away from or moving from the midline of the body

Laws – principles and regulations established in a community by some authority and applicable to its people, they must be obeyed and are enforced by the courts of law.

Legal – permitted by law

Legionnaires disease – a disease caused by inhaling droplets of water, suspended in air and infected with a bacterium called legionella pneumophila. Outbreaks occur from purpose built water systems where temperatures are warm enough to encourage growth of bacteria such as whirlpool spas, cooling towers, or evaporative condensers that are part of an air conditioning and industrial cooling systems.

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Legislation – a proposed or current law or body of laws that affect the way in which a business is run and how services are delivered to clients. Laws are designed to protect the business owner as well as the client.

Lentigo – a small pigmented macule, (plural lentiginos) the common name is a freckle. Lentigo simplex may be present at birth but more commonly develops in early childhood. Solar lentiginos appear with age, they are collections of pigment caused by exposure to the sun. Most common in those over the age of 55, they often appear on the back of the hands but also on sun exposed areas such as face, back, shoulders, arms and feet.

Lesion – a wound or injury; localised abnormal change to tissue formation, usually caused by trauma, infection, damage, or disease.

Leucocyte – white blood cell that engulfs and digests bacteria, an important part of the body's immune system, there are three main types; granulocytes, lymphocytes and monocytes.

Leucoderma – a gradual loss of colour from the skin, it may be in small patches or widespread, the skin sometimes becomes totally devoid of the pigment melanin, also known as vitiligo.

Leuconychia – white spots appearing on the nail plate, caused by air bubbles or a blow to the nail, will eventually grow out.

Licence – a legal document giving formal permission or authorisation for a specific purpose such as, to manufacture, use or sell something.

Lifestyle – a way of life, the habits, attitudes, standards, economic level and tastes that reflects the mode or style of living of a person or group of people. Information about clients' lifestyles will help the therapist formulate an appropriate treatment plan. Lifestyle advice is also an important aspect of the complete treatment, as suggestions concerning changes in lifestyle may improve the results achieved.

Ligament – is connective tissue attaching bone to bone

Limbic system – is part of the human brain that deals with emotion, memory and motivation.

Limited company – is a legal business status, where the company's finances are separate from the personal finances of the owners. The shareholders personal assets are protected if the business fails. A private limited company may have one or more members but cannot offer shares to the public. Public limited companies (PLC) must have at least two shareholders and may offer shares to the public. A limited company must be registered at Companies House and must have at least one director (two if it is a PLC) and a company secretary, who may also be shareholders. From October 2008 it will no longer be necessary for PLC's to have a company secretary.

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Link selling – to make a sale by providing goods that relate to or complement others, for instance if a client is buying a cleanser they may wish to buy the toning lotion or moisturiser that complement it. Other links are, a nail enamel in a particular colour to match a lipstick or a scented bubble bath or body lotion to match a perfume.

Lip balm – a softening and moisturising product for the lips to prevent them chapping and to protect from the environment. The lips have no sweat or sebaceous glands therefore dry out very easily,

Lip gloss – a cosmetic used to provide shine and colour to the lips. It comes in two forms as a viscous liquid or a soft solid. Other ingredients such as collagen or plumping agents are added to enhance the texture and appearance of the lips. It is applied with a brush or wand or squeezed from a tube directly onto the lips

Lipliner – a cosmetic lip pencil used to provide definition to the lips or change the shape of the mouth before applying lipstick. A hard pencil will prevent the lipstick 'bleeding' into the fine lines around the mouth.

Liposomes – microscopic lipid (fat) sacs, used to deliver other ingredients into the skin, they hold other ingredients and then release them after being absorbed into the skin.

Lipstick – a cosmetic product applied with a brush to add colour and moisture to the lips. It contains a mixture of oils, waxes, pigments and emollients and is best applied with a lip brush

Liquefying cleanser – a cleansing cream with a high oil content that melts when applied to the skin. It removes all traces of makeup and leaves the skin moist and supple without upsetting the acid mantle.

Lordosis – an abnormal forward curvature of the spine in the lumbar region

Lumbar – the area of the back between the lowest ribs and the hips

Lumen – the duct, cavity or inside of a vessel.

Lunula – white crescent shaped area at the base of the nail plate and forms the emerging, immature plump nail plate cells. As these cells move forward to form the nail plate they lose their inner material and become flat, hard and transparent

Luteinising hormone (LH) – hormone secreted by the anterior lobe of the pituitary gland, it stimulates the ovary to release the ovum (egg) in the female and prepares the uterus to receive the fertilised egg. In the male it stimulates the testes to produce testosterone.

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Lye – another name for sodium hydroxide formed when the salts of the body separate and reform when in contact with direct current.

Lymph – fluid in the lymphatic system derived from tissue fluids, it circulates around the lymphatic system removing bacteria and certain proteins from the tissues. It also transports fat from the small intestine and supplies mature lymphocytes to the blood. Lymph flows from the tissues to the lymph nodes, then to the right lymphatic and thoracic ducts and from there, lymph drains into the right and left subclavian veins.

Lymph capillaries – thin walled vessels through which nutrients, dissolved gases and waste products can easily pass. They are the main area of exchange between the lymph fluid bathing the body tissues and blood.

Lymph drainage – is the movement of lymph from the tissues, through the lymphatic vessels, to the nodes, cleansing the body's tissues and returning the lymph to the circulatory system from the right lymphatic duct and thoracic duct via the subclavian veins. This may be achieved using mechanical or manual massage, mechanical massage may involve, vacuum suction, G5 or Endermologie, the manual massage uses gentle wave like movements to drain away excess fluid and trapped toxins.

Lymph duct – part of the lymphatic system, the right lymphatic duct and the thoracic duct are vessels that drain lymph fluid into the circulatory system

Lymph nodes – small structures made of lymph tissue, located at intervals along the lymphatic system particularly at the neck, under the arm and in the groin, they filter bacteria and foreign particles from lymph fluid. When the body is fighting infection lymph nodes may become swollen with activated lymphocytes.

Lymph vessels – are channels or ducts in the lymphatic system that contain and convey lymph from the tissues to the circulatory system. They are sometimes called lymphatics. The walls are thin and they contain valves that prevent lymph from flowing backwards.

Lymphatic organs – specialised lymph tissue which includes, the thymus, situated in the centre of the upper chest behind the breast bone, in which lymphocytes mature, multiply and become T cells, the spleen, the largest of the lymphatic organs situated in the upper left part of the abdomen, it filters blood, acts as a blood reservoir and destroys old blood cells and the tonsils, small masses of lymphoid tissue situated on either side of the back of the throat.

Lymphatic system – the interconnected system of spaces and vessels between body tissues and organs by which lymph circulates around the body to protect it from disease, clean it of waste and maintain fluid balance. It consists of; lymph, lymph vessels, nodes, ducts, thymus spleen, tonsils and bone marrow.

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Lymphocytes – white blood cells produced in the bone marrow, known as B cells and T cells, they are transported around the body in the circulatory and lymphatic systems carrying out activities in the immune system.