



THERE WILL BE BLOOD

The newest skin-care ingredient is not for the squeamish.

Skin care has taken a decidedly macabre turn. Take Barbara Sturm, a German physician with a skin-care line, who has come up with a very unorthodox way to boost skin's radiance. And I happily guinea-pigged myself. Here's what happened: After drawing two vials of my blood, Sturm separated out the plasma using a centrifuge, incubated it for four hours to multiply its healing agents—interleukin-1-antagonist and growth factors—and mixed it into a shea-butter-based cream.

Sturm's cream, MC1 (we're hoping for a more exciting name down the road), is the only one that makes plasma available for topical at-home use. (And although the rest of Sturm's paraben-, fragrance-, and mineral-oil-free products are now available in the U.S., you'll have to travel to Germany to get this one—so add a round-trip ticket to the cream's \$1,400 price tag.) Sturm says her plasma cream will

stimulate collagen and reduce inflammation, but no independent trials have proven those claims.

Reputable studies do show, however, that platelet-rich plasma (PRP)—plasma processed to retain a high concentration of the body's natural growth factors—can help tissue heal faster when injected. It's now used to help with postsurgical wound healing, chronic tendinitis, and osteoarthritis, explains Raja Sivamani, an assistant professor of clinical dermatology at the University of California, Davis. Many dermatologists also inject PRP into the scalp to stimulate follicles and grow hair. "I use PRP in concert with at-home topical minoxidil, and patients start seeing more hair after three to six months," says Doris Day, a New York City dermatologist. "You need three to four monthly treatments initially, but only [one] every six months or even less often after that. The growth factors stimulate the hair's growth cycles, and

those positive effects can last months and even years after treatment."

Then, of course, there's the "vampire facial"—a term trademarked by internist Charles Runels (and made famous by Kim Kardashian West). It describes a treatment in which PRP is injected into the dermis to stimulate collagen and elastin growth. Many dermatologists now use the technique regularly (without the Transylvania references). "We offer facial PRP treatments to treat sun damage and acne scars. Patients have smoother, more even skin in as little as two weeks," says Neil Sadick, a New York City dermatologist. "We're just beginning to tap into plasma's possibilities, particularly when we apply it topically right after using fractional lasers and needling devices, which help get it to the lower layers of the skin more effectively." —SARAH BRUNING

