

HEALTH NEWS ✓ Fact Checked

Kim Kardashian Has Made It Famous... What Exactly Is a 'Vampire Facial'?

A New Mexico spa has issued a warning about HIV infections from “vampire facials.” Here are the benefits and risks.



Image courtesy of Instagram/kimkardashian

In a single Instagram post, Kim Kardashian made “vampire facials” famous.

Now, the threat of [HIV infections at a New Mexico spa](#) has highlighted the hidden dangers in the procedure.

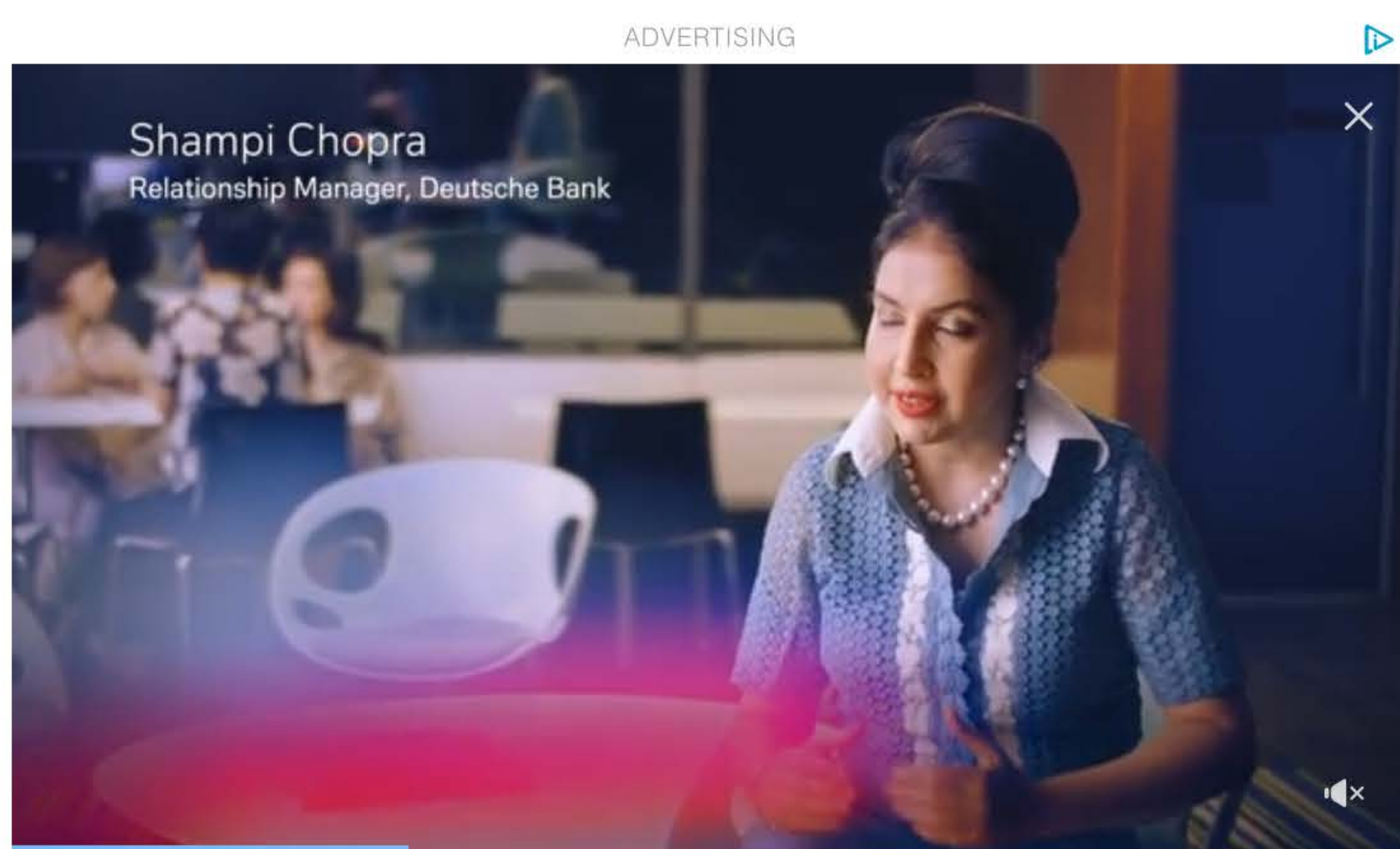
Many are asking if the benefits of a “vampire facial” are worth the risk.

Healthline spoke with several skin experts to better understand what this facial entails and if people should be concerned.

Dr. Lisa Donofrio, associate clinical professor in the department of dermatology at [Yale University School of Medicine](#), told Healthline that readers should be wary to equate “vampire facial” with a medical term.

“It’s a marketing term and can mean many different things,” she said.

So what are you signing up for if you decide to get one? Well, it depends which clinic you ask.



Procedures that clinics describe as vampire facials include:

- taking a patient's whole blood and mixing it with Restylane (or Juvederm)
- mixing a patient's plasma with Restylane
- injecting a patient's whole blood or plasma into wrinkles and folds without adding a filler
- microneedling the platelet-rich portion of a patient's plasma into the surface of the skin

The latter procedure is arguably the most popular and is referred to as PRP.

According to Dr. Marc DuPéré, a Royal College–certified cosmetic plastic surgeon at the [Visage Clinic in Toronto](#), the procedure is popular and can be beneficial beyond facials.

PRP can be used for hair loss and transplants, fat grafting procedures, and laser skin procedures like vaginal rejuvenation, DuPéré said.

What's involved?

The exact process will differ based upon the clinic.

“It can be performed by using a microneedling device to create multiple micro-punctures into the skin,” Dr. Benjamin Barankin, a Toronto dermatologist and medical director of [Toronto Dermatology Centre](#) told Healthline.

“With PRP, you're applying platelet-rich plasma into the skin. Your blood is drawn, then using a centrifuge, it's spun fast to separate the layers, and then the plasma is specifically taken. It contains platelets, and these platelets contain high levels of growth factors, which when applied to skin will activate stem cells already in your skin by tricking them into thinking there's been an injury. Healthier activity in the skin cells leads then to more collagen.”

Barankin added that the discomfort of the treatment is “mild to modest” and “it isn't what people read or hear about.”

Recovery time is usually a few days with tightness, itchiness, and redness. Besides avoiding alcohol and eating well, a person doesn't need to do any preparatory work before the procedure.

Aftercare does include dermatologist-recommended serums and creams to speed healing.

Benefits of the procedure

So why would someone choose PRP over any other kind of facial?

Each skin expert Healthline spoke with agreed the benefits outweigh the downside. The benefits include:

- restoring a glow to skin
- making pores appear smaller
- increasing plumpness
- creating an even skin tone
- reducing fine lines, stretch marks, and acne scars
- improving skin laxity
- overall younger, healthier, smoother skin
- detoxing the skin

What are the risks?

With the news of HIV risks at the spa in New Mexico, some people are concerned about the safety behind using blood as a beauty tool.

DuPéré emphasizes that blood products should never be shared, even in a family setting. The blood drawn from you should only be used on you.

Donofrio urges readers interested in getting the procedure to seek out certified dermatologists.

“Anytime the skin is broken there's a risk for infection so it's important to have this done in a dermatologist's office and not in a spa since blood products are being handled,” she said.

And while contamination and HIV are real risk factors, Barankin argues proper technique and precautions can mitigate them.

“Whenever treating with blood, sterile technique [is] needed to prevent infection and avoid spreading of diseases,” he said. “Cleaning of equipment and glove changing before and after touching skin [is] a must. [The procedure] should only be performed at a medical clinic.”

Expert recommendations

For optimal results, the PRP should be repeated.

DuPéré shares his frequency guidelines, based upon desired effects:

- For anti-aging: three treatments six to eight weeks apart, then yearly
- For [vaginal rejuvenation](#) with a diVa laser (called the O-shot): three treatments six to eight weeks apart, then yearly
- For hair loss: three treatments six to eight weeks apart, then yearly
- For hair transplant: one to two treatments before transplant then every four to eight weeks for four to six months

While the PRP can be used for a variety of reasons, it's not advised that people with blood diseases, blood clotting difficulties, diabetes, or active acne or skin infections get this treatment.

Written by Michelle Pugle on September 19, 2018



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