

We Tested 7 Beauty Products You Can Allegedly Use While You're At Work

From head massagers to foot masks

BY TRACY MIDDLETON November 28, 2017

Self-care. It sounds like a whisper, but as buzzwords go, it's practically deafening. More than 3 million Instagram posts are tagged with the phrase, and Google searches for the term are peaking. Everyone wants it, and experts say it's a mental health must. But like most women, I struggle to fit it in. I've got a demanding full-time job and two grade-school kids. I value taking care of myself, but five-step #selfcaresunday facials? Not happening. I mean, I once took my daughter to an Ulta on the way home from preschool pickup so I could get a quick lip wax. (Try explaining lady-staches to a 4-year-old. I'll wait.)

When I do manage to carve out some dedicated me-time—say, a Sunday afternoon bath (our freestanding soaking tub is my personal oasis)—I don't fully enjoy it. The nagging voice in my head says I should be playing with my kids or tackling another load of laundry, not lounging among the bubbles.

"There's still a cultural expectation that, for women, being 'good' means taking care of others," says psychiatrist Gail Saltz, M.D., author of *The Power of Different*. By default, that means being "bad" is doing things for yourself. So we double down, putting everyone else's needs before our own. A new study confirmed, yet again, that women tend to handle more housework and childcare than men and carry more of the mental load (tracking grocery lists, birthdays). That's on top of our day jobs. Nearly 75 million of us are employed, and in 40 percent of households, we bring home the bulk of the bacon. All reasons why research shows that attaining work-life balance is getting harder, not easier.

Beauty-related self-care is especially loaded. Activities like exercise or meditation are more easily justifiable because they help us to stay healthy and live longer (so we can, you know, take care of other people for years to come). Beauty practices, though, can feel vain, says Saltz. Even the words we use to describe getting a massage or facial—indulging, splurging, pampering—sound self-absorbed. But we need to change that, says Saltz: "Women should know that if getting a manicure helps them feel confident, that helps their mental health." Plus, as Saltz reminded me, it can set a good example. She has a point. I don't want my daughters to feel guilt-ridden for spending an hour on themselves when they're harried grown-ups.

Still, when I've really got no time for a drawn-out ritual, I slather on a hair mask before heading out for a weekend run, or I paint my girls' nails when I do my own so we can bond over matching manis. It's no day at the spa, but it still counts, says Saltz. "As long as you enjoy the process or outcome, it's self-care," she explains. Which makes the latest crop of beauty goods especially serendipitous: products that plump your skin or massage your scalp while letting you multitask. Products that, theoretically, could even do their work while you're at work.

(Find more inner calm and build strength in just minutes a day with WH's With Yoga DVD!)

Many are unobtrusive: no-rinse, moisturizing booties you can stealthily slip on under your desk, a hand treatment you can type in. But say you work at a bank or restaurant. For those gigs, the crow's-feet-fighting goggles and helmet-like head massager are NSFW. The takeaway here, though, remains: These products are quick—most perform their magic in less than five minutes—and can be done almost anywhere. In the name of science (of course), I tried 'em all while editing this very issue of WH. If I wasn't able to achieve complete Zen, at least I found a few minutes of calm. And better skin! Brighter skin! Now... when's the last time you said that about work?



What is it? Flexible silver and white goggles that beam line-diminishing red LED lights around your eyes for three minutes.

Expert take: "There is evidence that red LED lights can promote new collagen formation," says Laurel Geraghty, M.D., a dermatologist in Medford, Oregon. "Fine lines and elasticity could improve after three months; new collagen production could take up to six."

Tracy says: "I felt goofy, like a Star Trek extra, but was still able to see my computer screen while wearing them. I'll probably keep using them."



What is it? Mess-free (read: no need to wash your feet afterward), single-use booties lined with an almond extract-infused lotion that you leave on for 20 minutes.

Expert take: "Almond-derived ingredients have been used for centuries for their moisturizing and anti-inflammatory properties," says Geraghty. "Trapping them against the skin could help soften flaky heels."

Tracy says: "I'm in love with the scent. A coworker actually came into my office to ask if I was burning a cookie-scented candle! And my feet emerged baby-soft; the effect lasted for days."



What is it? A 15-minute hand mask using "dry" technology. The ingredients—peptides and plant extracts to diminish dark spots and improve skin tone—are printed into the velvety Japanese fabric and released into skin upon contact, instead of being suspended in a water-based formula. It slips over the top of hands and hooks onto your thumbs.

Expert take: "Dry masks can increase hydration, temporarily hiding lines," says New York City dermatologist **Kristina Goldenberg, M.D.** Just don't expect one to give significant, visible, or lasting results.

Tracy says: "I'm vigilant about handwashing, so my hands are parched in the winter. These are comfy and didn't interfere with my typing, and my skin felt supple and less rough when I took them off."



What is it? Another "dry" mask—this one is loaded with humectants to blur lines and wrinkles in 15 minutes.

Expert take: Like the hand version, this face mask "forces moisture into your skin, which can temporarily decrease the appearance of lines. But if you're acne-prone, the oil concentration in this product could cause breakouts," says [Goldenberg](#).

Tracy says: "After hooking the white mask behind my ears, I looked like Michael Myers from Halloween, but it was great for a quick prep before after-work drinks with colleagues. It made my complexion look glowy and hydrated and didn't leave sticky serum around my hairline the way wet sheet masks do."



What is it? Ten slip-on mini finger masks to soothe parched cuticles and nails using lavender and rose extracts.

Expert take: "Cuticles protect the nail matrix and are essential for healthy nail growth; hydrating them is crucial. But the fragrance could irritate those with sensitive skin," says [Goldenberg](#).

Tracy says: "The tiny pouches were slippery and wet—hint: apply them to your dominant hand last!—but the rose scent was to die for. I slid the individual pouches over my digits, then chatted with a colleague for about 15 minutes... they're too bulky to type in. When I slipped them off, my fingers felt manicure-fresh."



What is it? A cordless helmet (you have to charge it first) that uses air pressure, vibration, and heat to target acupuncture points on the head; it runs for 10 minutes.

Expert take: "Vibration, gentle pressure, and mild heat are conducive to stress relief," says Eva Carey, a massage therapist and national community director of on-demand massage company Zeel. "The scalp holds a lot of tension—even a 10-minute massage can soothe a headache, better your mood, and boost energy."

Tracy says: "The pressure and vibrations were too intense for me, no matter how I adjusted the settings. But other staffers loved it. WH's beauty director said she was 'blissed out' by the kneading."



What is it? A leather-covered, foot spa-size device. Pick from three 20-minute programs (with varying intensity) that employ deep-kneading massagers, heat, and air compression.

Expert take: "Foot massage can reduce pain and swelling, especially if you stand all day," says Carey. "The heat works to soften muscle tissue, making the massage more effective."

Tracy says: "Are foot-gasms a thing? Because I think I just had one. This is taking up permanent residence under my desk."

This article originally appeared in the December 2017 issue of Women's Health. For more great advice, pick up a copy of the issue on newsstands now!