

Microblading. Aka How To Fix Your Eyebrows Forever

What is microblading and why is it your permanent perfect eyebrow solution?



INSTAGRAM - CARA DELEVINGNE

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I was in my late teens when I developed the habit of penciling over my blonde brows to make them darker. It was the nineties so I started plucking them too – God knows why, but less was more at the time. Fast-forward a decade and my natural brows were almost invisible.

The routine of drawing them on daily (sometimes a little asymmetrically if I was hungover or tired or in a rush) continued, but I tried not to let their temporary status put me off going to the beach. Sunglasses are handy when sea and sun cream have all but rubbed them away. Stoochrolling can be a little trickier – in fact it's impossible to maintain any trace of make-up after you have swum around with your face in the water and a mask over your eyes. I am also not the kind of girl who can be bothered with make up – I years to be able to get up and go, to be someone who can just throw water on their face and look perfect.



Now in my early thirties, it was a revelation to hear about getting them tattooed. I'd heard about it a couple of years ago but dismissed it as a bit scary. "What if they did it wrong and it looked worse? What if it looked really unnatural? What if they drew them on crooked? Surely it really hurts?" The turning point was chatting to a friend who had tried microblading and was impressed with the results. I was inspired.

The microblading technique is still technically a cosmetic tattoo – since pigment is placed into the skin – but it involves a much smaller amount of pigment going into superficial layers of the skin so you get a more feathered, natural and softer finish with no inclination to tint orange or green over time, as with the more traditional tattooing techniques.

I was recommended to try Karen Betts, a renowned permanent make up artist with more than 20 years of experience. She also works out of clinic on London's Harley Street, which I found reassuring. Karen doesn't like to describe microblading as "semi-permanent make up", even though this seems the most obvious way to explain it. It's a tattoo that will fade in 12 to 18 months, at which point clients can return for a retouch.

I was greeted in reception and asked to wait while some anaesthetic cream was applied to my brows. I was then taken through to Karen who warmly greeted me before chatting through the procedure. She removed the existing pencil (you need to come with your make up on so she can see it) and then drew the brows on the way she would tattoo them, to see what I thought.



Karen warned me I might not like them at first as they would be very different. Karen was right – I did feel a little apprehensive about them, but I was assured this is normal when a professional is breaking the habit of a lifetime. To me they looked so thick and weird. I picture-messaged someone who would know – ELLE Beauty Director Sophie – and she loved them, so after a couple of minor tweaks I decided I was ready. (Karen says she can redraw them as many times as you like until you are happy with them – but she does make sure they work with the dimensions of your face, measuring the distance between the eyes and nose.)

Lying down with a light shining brightly in my face, I felt nervous. I couldn't see the tool Karen was using (it is essentially a very long blade made up of tiny needles that she is in the process of patenting) but I could imagine it. The initial strokes on each brow were quite painful but not as bad as the threading she did beforehand. With a bit more anaesthetic applied, the rest of the session was moderately pain-free, with little scratches scored into the surface of the skin and then pigment rubbed in. In this way, every individual hair can be rendered realistically.



JENNY AFTER THE TREATMENT

I was amazed that the treatment took less than 30 minutes, and I was immediately thrilled with the results. After an hour, the numbing cream wore off and the white line around each brow disappeared. I thought there would be a lot of redness and soreness but there wasn't (just a minor amount of discomfort). For the next week I had to avoid getting them wet and apply some healing balm. Six weeks later I returned for a quick retouch – after the first two days, the colour will lighten about 30 per cent as the skin heals.



JENNY BEFORE AND AFTER

It is no exaggeration to say Karen Betts' microblading treatment has changed my life. My morning routine is so more efficient and I no longer have to worry about looking good after swimming, or even popping to the shops for milk without drawing them in. It's liberating and massively confidence boosting. I will never draw my brows on again.

The microblading eyebrow treatment costs £895 (consultation and treatment plus follow-up for retouching), with top-ups after 12 to 18 months at £395.

Risks and side effects: don't go to a cheap, inexperienced practitioner as there is plenty of room for error.

<http://www.karenbetts.co.uk/treatment/brows/procedure.html>