



THE CLOSEST THING TO THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

By Lori Storm

THERE'S REALLY no such thing as aging gracefully. We can't turn back the clock, but technological advancements in cosmetic surgery are making it easier to look younger and enhance appearance.

"We haven't found the fountain of youth. It's more like a dip in the pool," says Dr. Mark Rawson of AestheticsMD in Minneapolis.

Every year millions undergo aesthetic and cosmetic procedures, and it's not just Hollywood A-listers. Although some scoff at the idea of plastic surgery, calling it vanity, the reality is a growing number of baby boomers are looking in the mirror and want a change.

Dr. Jaime Davis of Uptown Dermatology and SkinSpa believes people are feeling much younger on the inside than they may look on the outside. "People don't come in and say, 'make me gorgeous.' They want me to match up the inside and the outside," says Dr. Davis.

ABOUT FACE

According to Dr. Davis, the most common cosmetic complaints are wrinkles, fine lines and discoloration of skin from sun damage. There are several cosmetic procedures that can yield dramatic results in rejuvenating the skin and even removing pre-cancerous cells. >>

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One of the newest innovations in skin resurfacing is the Harmony Pixel Laser. Not only does it treat wrinkles and sun damage, the laser is extremely effective in reducing acne scars and improving skin firmness and texture. Dr. Davis says the laser basically heats up little dots on the skin, stimulating new collagen. She describes the process as extreme exfoliation. “The outer layer regenerates really quickly and you can get much healthier skin. This is not simply a look-good procedure. This is definitely rebuilding collagen and taking away surface sun damage,” says Dr. Davis.

During the treatment, patients may feel some heat as the laser pulses the skin. When finished, some can expect to experience a mild ‘sunburn’ sensation for a few hours. Redness generally lasts two to three days rather than the one to two weeks with traditional laser resurfacing. It’s a process that usually takes three sessions and it doesn’t come cheap. In the Twin Cities you can expect to pay between \$800 and \$1200 for a single session.

FACE LIFT IN A BOTTLE

Patients with deeper lines and sagging skin who have lost volume in their face due to aging or illness may opt for fillers. One of the most effective injectables on the market is called Sculptra, a synthetic Poly-L-lactic acid material that naturally stimulates the body to produce its own collagen. Using Sculptra results in a more youthful and natural-looking appearance. “Patients have told me it’s like they’re looking at their passport picture from ten years ago,” Dr. Davis comments.

The procedure itself is often performed with a numbing cream and a local anesthetic to minimize pain. The most common side effects include tenderness, redness and discomfort at the injection site. Referred to by some physicians as a “face lift in a bottle,” Sculptra is especially appealing because it can last up to two years. While one treatment may be sufficient, doctors recommend that most people have two or three sessions with a price tag starting at \$1000 apiece.

BODY SCULPTING

There are minimally invasive procedures that can also do wonders for shaping and toning the body. Many steer clear of traditional liposuction because of the pain, cost and prolonged downtime. Now there is a nonsurgical alternative called LipoDissolve that claims to melt away fat in unwanted areas through a series of injections. It is one of the most popular procedures at the Skin Rejuvenation Clinic in Edina, and Doctor Elizabeth Brauer Hagberg calls the results phenomenal.

So how does it work? LipoDissolve is a non-surgical treatment that involves a naturally occurring enzyme solution called phosphatidylcholine deoxycholate. It is administered through a series of micro-injections to permanently dissolve unwanted fat. Typically, patients need a series of two to four treatments spaced four weeks apart. In the metro area, the cost ranges from \$300 to \$600 a session.

LipoDissolve is all about body sculpting. Doctor Hagberg recommends it for those who are unhappy with a flabby area such as the chin, back of arms, thighs or tummy. “Generally the people who get wonderful results are the ones who want to sculpt a specific area that they just can’t get rid of with diet and exercise,” says Dr. Hagberg. “They could do a hundred sit-ups and it never really flattens their tummy like they want.”

Nicknamed “lunchtime lipo,” the procedure generally takes less than an hour and some patients immediately return to work. Dr. Hagberg describes LipoDissolve as relatively painless, but she admits patients commonly experience discomfort for 24 hours after the treatment due to swelling. While not approved by the FDA, Dr. Hagberg believes LipoDissolve is safe and has even undergone the procedure herself. “Hundreds of my patients have had LipoDissolve without any adverse reactions,” she says.

SMARTER OPTION?

Smartlipo is another alternative to removing unwanted fat, when diet and exercise won’t do the trick. Dr. Rawson points out that only one treatment is required to achieve dramatic results. “With LipoDissolve, the process takes weeks and generally multiple treatments. When Smartlipo is done the fat is essentially gone. I think Smartlipo can give more immediate results and the patient can be more certain of the results,” Dr. Rawson explains.

Good candidates for Smartlipo are healthy and physically fit, but are frustrated with a small area of isolated fat. It is an ideal procedure for eliminating fat deposits in the neck, arms, abdomen, thighs and hips. “Smartlipo is not for large areas. I don’t advertise it as a weight-loss plan,” says Dr. Rawson.

Smartlipo is a laser-assisted procedure performed with a one-millimeter tube inserted under the skin. The laser fiber inside the tube delivers energy directly to the fat cells causing them to rupture. The waste is then gently suctioned out. During the process, the laser is heating the skin from underneath, which builds collagen, resulting in tighter skin tissue.

The FDA-approved procedure, with a starting cost of \$1500, is performed using local anesthesia. While Dr. Rawson says some patients experience minor bruising, there is very little pain. “Some people are out walking or shopping the evening of their procedure. Some will have mild aching, but a lot of patients tell me they are surprised they didn’t experience more pain.”

Area doctors stress that it’s best to proceed with caution no matter what the procedure. They say cosmetic surgery should always be performed by or under the direct supervision of a physician. And even though cosmetic procedures can be expensive, many clinics offer free consultations and package discounts.

“There have been numerous patients who have come into our clinic skeptical about treatment, but have been surprised by the process and ended up loving their results,” said Dr. Hagberg. **LORI STORM**