

What Is A Nonsurgical Face-Lift? Plastic Surgeons Explain.

It's no longer necessary to get nipped if you want to look tucked.

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In our current age of social media, in which we're constantly bombarded with seemingly "flawless" (i.e. filtered) images of Instagram models and the Kardashian-Jenner crew, it's no surprise that people in this country are more interested in cosmetic procedures than ever before. And there's a boom in procedures that don't require patients to go under the knife.

In 2016, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons reported Americans underwent 17.1 million cosmetic procedures, which was up 3 percent from 2015. Of that 17.1 million, 1.7 million were cosmetic surgical procedures (up 4 percent from 2015) and 15.4 million were minimally invasive procedures (up 3 percent from 2015).

Minimally invasive (and nonsurgical) refers to procedures like facial injectables and laser resurfacing treatments that don't require hospitalization or large incisions. They're also associated with little to no downtime, which means you can typically be in and out of the doctor's office without much discomfort.

Looking at the numbers, it's clear that while individuals are getting work done, they aren't always looking to go under the knife. Instead, patients are opting for treatments and procedures that provide results similar to face-lifts without the actual surgery, aka nonsurgical face-lifts.

So, What Exactly Is A Nonsurgical Face-Lift?

A nonsurgical face-lift can include a number of different treatments and procedures that aim to address the effects of aging, as New York-based dermatologist [Michelle Yagoda](#), explained to HuffPost. One of the most common things people do, she said, is have fillers injected into the face.

As we get older, we lose volume in our faces, specifically in the cheeks, temples, lips, around the mouth and under the eyes, Park Avenue Facial Plastic Surgeon Andrew Jacono explained. With the use of fillers, plastic surgeons are replacing that lost volume to help “reverse the creation of shadows and restore the reflection of light which gives the appearance of youth, energy and vibrancy.”

It should be noted that there are different kinds of fillers one can use — gel (typically hyaluronic acid, as in Juvederm or Restylane) or fat.

Gel fillers are considered nonsurgical but fat injections are not. With fat injections, doctors take fat from a part of your body, such as your stomach, and inject it into your face to fill in wrinkles and lines. Fat injections last longer than hyaluronic acid fillers and can be permanent, but they do require surgery.

Nonsurgical fillers, on the other hand, can be used in a number of places, including the nasal labial folds, which are the lines that connect your nose to the corners of your mouth; the marionette lines, which extend from the corners of the mouth down to the chin; and in the chin crease, to achieve a more youthful appearance, Yagoda explained. Fillers can also be injected along the jawline to help provide definition, and in the cheek area. Yagoda noted that cheek injections aren't the right course of action for everyone.

“I think cheek injections are very overused and lead to a lot of premature aging, but in the right person, it can be a really good nonsurgical face-lift,” she said. “That right person is somebody who has a flat mid-face and undefined cheekbones to begin with.”

Yagoda also explained that nonsurgical face-lifts can sometimes involve Botox, which is often used in the forehead.

“Technically it's not a face-lift but more of a brow lift, but most people think of rejuvenation of the face including all areas,” she said.

“The best thing since sliced bread is Botox,” Broumand said, adding that the use of Botox and fillers can shave years off someone's face, making them look up to “a generation younger.”

What About Procedures With No Needles?

For those who aren't interested in having needles injected into their faces, there are a number of treatments available that promote tightening of the skin, which can also provide younger-looking skin.

For instance, there are laser resurfacing treatments, such as Clear + Brilliant, that can “change the glow of the skin,” Broumand said. These treatments can tighten the pores and improve the quality of the skin. They come with little downtime, although patients may experience some redness, which generally calms down within a couple of hours, Broumand said.

A chemical peel is another treatment that can help with resurfacing the skin and reducing the look of fine lines, wrinkles and pores, Yagoda said, adding that a chemical peel could provide “up to a 30 percent tightening” of the skin.

There are also treatments that use ultrasound energy or radiofrequency energy to tighten the skin below the surface, such as Ultherapy, ThermiTight and Thermage.

These treatments “address the deep skin layers and foundational layer that lends support to the skin,” Jacono explained. “The foundational layer is called the SMAS (superficial muscular aponeurotic system) and in the neck is called the platysma. With today’s tightening devices, we can bypass the upper layers of the skin and deliver the right amount of energy to the right depths to contract and ultimately lift the SMAS and platysma.”

Yagoda noted that skin-tightening treatments like these can generally be done in two ways.

“There’s the one-and-done treatment, which costs a lot of money. There’s a lot of discomfort during the treatment, and you’re more likely to have a noticeable result,” she said. “And then there’s the multiple treatments that are much more comfortable, kind of like adding a warming treatment on at the end of a facial, and you do a series of those.”

She noted that the multiple-treatment option is less expensive per treatment, “but they add up the more you do,” and you generally see a smaller degree of change.

How Long Will A Nonsurgical Face-Lift Last?

How long results last will depend on what type of treatment or procedure you get. With nonsurgical procedures, it’s likely you’ll need to get them done regularly to maintain your desired results.

For fillers, Broumand said, it depends on the location of the injection.

“If there’s a lot of motion or movement, the fillers tend to dissipate more rapidly. If there’s less motion in the area it’s injected, they tend to stay longer,” he said, adding that there are different types of fillers with different formulations, which will also affect how long it lasts. The effects of Botox generally wear off in 12 weeks, Broumand said, noting that patients will generally come in regularly to maintain their results.

Your practitioner should advise you on when to return for a follow-up visit, but, as Broumand suggested, most patients will be able to tell on their own, as they’ll notice the treatments wearing off.

As both Broumand and Yagoda explained, there can be cumulative benefits to receiving injectables regularly.

“The more diligent our patients are about maintaining it regularly, the less they need over time, because those muscles are affected and the wrinkles are diminished, so over time, what [initially] required three syringes [might] now require two syringes,” Broumand said.

“I find typically with my patients, the first and second time they need the most volume of filler and then, after that, the touchups are a lot less,” Yagoda said. “The body makes a type of scaffolding where the filler is injected and that allows the wrinkle to not get as deep as it was initially.”

With regular maintenance and proper treatment, Broumand said that patients who start in their 30s can look the same in their 50s.

When it comes to the laser treatments, Yagoda said, when they work, they can be fairly effective. However, she said, “time doesn’t stand still. The aging process continues.”

“What you’ve tightened will stay tight up until a certain point, but your skin and soft tissue are going to continue to age,” she added. “So you will kind of need to do more at a certain point to catch up with the aging process.”

Jacono explained that nonsurgical face-lifts are “a temporary fix” that can last one to two years, whereas a surgical face-lift typically lasts 10 years.

“As we age and our facial skin becomes more lax, an increasing amount of injectable material and tightening is needed for the increasing void of volume, but the results will show a decreasing amount of improvement,” he said. “It is at this point that patients usually opt for surgery.”

If cosmetic procedures — surgical or nonsurgical — are of interest to you, make sure to speak with a qualified doctor.