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Anti-aging secrets

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If an older face is like a raisin, puckered and sunken in places, then the latest idea in cosmetic anti-aging medicine is to plump it back into the shape of a fresh grape.

So much for aging like fine wine.

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"Now it's about replacing loss of volume," Dr. Gary Monheit, president of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery, told Cosmetic Boot Camp attendees. "Filling material is the new frontier for facial aging."

"Old age is a volume loss issue," says Dr. Patricia Wexler, associate clinical professor at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. "Look at the full cheeks of a child. Over time you go from convex to flat because of fat wasting in the aging face."

Wexler is an expert in fat transfers, that is harvesting fat from a patient's body — typically from a woman's saddle bags — and injecting it into the face.

Be it fat, collagen or some other substance, injectable fillers are the rage. The brand names — Restylane, Captique, CosmoPlast, CosmoDerm — are recognizable to a certain set not content with relinquishing appearance to time.

It takes a devoted patient and a healthy bank account to keep up with the latest FDA-approved fillers — Juvederm in June, just in case you didn't know — and to maintain an injection schedule. Most injectable fillers give temporary results, making a trip to a clinician every three to six months a must, lest you start sagging. High maintenance is a relative term, but costs vary from several hundred to several thousand dollars a year to keep wrinkles inflated with filler.

"My patients don't miss appointments, not even for a (Manolo) Blahnik sale," Wexler said of her high-profile Manhattan practice.

A doctor selling injectable youth can develop an intensely loyal following. More than a dozen women



followed their dermatologists to Aspen to serve as medical models in exchange for free anti-aging injections.

Joan Grant, 77, from West Palm Beach, didn't mind being injected before a conference room full of physicians learning the latest techniques from her local cosmetic dermatologist, Dr. Kenneth Beer. She and her husband made a little vacation out of the trip and saved some money on her doctor's bill.

Grant had a face-lift and a mini face-lift in the '90s. Now, she's maintaining the appearance of a woman at least a decade younger with microdermabrasion treatments and injections of Restylane, Sculptra and Botox.

"I didn't want to go under the knife again," she said.

That sentiment is common, cosmetic dermatologists say. Wexler points to the tell-tale signs of yesterday's face-lift — skin pulled taught over a hollow face. These patients looked different, she says, but not necessarily younger or better.

"Every time we lift we need to fill," Wexler told her peers at Cosmetic Boot Camp. Otherwise, she said, you get the "*Beetlejuice* effect." Thanks to a menu of injectables, "a face-lift isn't always the answer."

Is your forehead creased, and your brow furrowed? Botox.

Do your crow's-feet crinkle when you smile? Captique.

Did your top lip deflate sometime in your late 30s? Restylane.

Want skin that won't wobble? Dr. Susan Weinkle of Bradenton says Sculptra, a filler-like substance first used to treat HIV atrophy, "replaces the padding under the carpet" of a woman's face.

"Each agent has a unique function and use," Monheit said.

And that is why Wexler says it's so important to make sure you're getting your fill from a knowledgeable expert. Ask for referrals from friends and inquire about the clinician's experience with the specific product recommended.

Borrowing a well-circulated phrase among cosmetic dermatologists, Wexler says, "It's not the filler, it's the filler."

ANTI-AGING

BUZZWORDS

Alpha Hydroxy Acids

Acids derived from foods such as fruit and milk, which can improve the texture of skin by exfoliating layers of dead cells and encouraging cell regeneration. AHAs include Lactic Acid, Glycolic Acid, Pyruvic Acid, Tartaric Acid and Maleic Acid.

Exfoliating is an important part of an anti-aging regimen, says Dr. Mary Lupo, because it resurfaces the texture of the skin and helps skin absorb other anti-aging products. She recommends washing the face

with a glycolic acid face wash.

AHAs can cause increased sensitivity to the sun.

Antioxidants

These substances — vitamins C, E, panthenol, grape seed and green tea — are designed to prevent a chemical reaction with oxygen. The main idea is that antioxidants protect cells from oxidizing, or rusting, from free-radical damage. Wrinkles are the most visible result of this type of damage.

'The jury is still out on whether antioxidants are really helping,' Wexler said.

But Lupo believes antioxidants in green tea extract 'can give improvement in the texture of skin.' Antioxidants may also enhance sun protective factors in sunscreen.

Lupo says Idebenone, the ingredient used in Elizabeth Arden's Prevage, 'may be the most potent antioxidant currently available.' The ingredients in Prevage are half the strength of those available through a dermatologist.

The antioxidant vitamin C may address uneven pigmentation.

Growth factors

This buzzword has been attached to lots of big claims, but it may stimulate cell growth and repair, stimulate new collagen formation, thicken the epidermis and result in smoother skin and fewer wrinkles. 'You want to go with Neocutis products if you want to add growth factors,' Lupo said (www.neocutis.com).

Hydroquinone

A bleaching agent that slows or blocks production of melanin to lighten age spots and fade dark or blotchy areas. 'You'll get some benefit from it,' Lupo says. Other de-pigmenting agents include vitamin C, Kojic acid, azaleic acid, paper-mulberry compound, chemical-peeling agents and chemical compounds.

Peptides

Anti-aging products containing peptides claim to regulate cell function and maximize collagen production by stimulating the growth of collagen cells resulting in the reduction of fine lines and increasing skin firmness and tone. 'Peptides are preventative — *if* they work,' Wexler said. Lupo recommends peptide products by Natura Bissé (www.naturabisse.com). StriVectin and Olay Regenerist are other products touting the value of peptides.

Retinoids

These derivatives of vitamin A can be used to treat adult acne, reverse sun damage, reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles and help the skin absorb other anti-aging products. Prescription-strength brands include Retin-A, Tazorac and Renova. Non-prescription-strength vitamin A derivatives are called retinols.

'Retinols and sunscreen; those are two things I know are proven and help. No doubt about it,' says Dr. Patricia Wexler. 'We know with good evidence-based medicine that before and after studies show that retinol shows a change in elastic tissue fibers, collagen and improved penetration of a product into the skin.'

It's Dr. Mary Lupo's turn to shoot up now.

The New Orleans-based dermatologist has been supplying other women for two days, sending them away satisfied with fuller lips and fewer wrinkles.

Like the other physicians and patients at Cosmetic Boot Camp 2006, Lupo's addicted to chasing signs of aging. As soon as the medical conference held in Aspen's St. Regis hotel is over, she heads to a peer's suite for a fix.

She has an annual appointment of sorts with Dr. Kenneth Beer of West Palm Beach. Beer and Lupo are Boot Camp program chairs.

"When you do it yourself you hold back because it hurts," Lupo says of the small, self-administered doses of Restylane and Botox she tides herself over with until she can meet up with Beer at medical conferences.

A tall 50-year-old redhead, Lupo doesn't have any wrinkles to speak of, and her complexion is clear of the spots and speckles that give away other women of a certain age.

She admits to being "a little" nervous about the injections she's about to receive, but stretched out on a sofa with pillows behind her neck and her feet up on the coffee table she looks like she could be waiting for an in-room massage.

Beer shoots her mouth with Septicaine, the same numbing medication dentists use.

"How much do you want?" Beer asks.

"Whatever you think." A thin line of drool spills from her mouth.

When Beer places the needle to her lip, she doesn't flinch.

"Are we OK?" he asks.

"Mmmhmm."

As Beer presses the needle's plunger, the ridge of Lupo's lip rises instantly with filler material. He traces her lip line with a string of quick pricks, wiping away tiny beads of blood as he goes. And then he stops, pulls back, considers her features, and begins massaging her lips vigorously.

"When you inject, you're injecting little pearls and you have to smooth them out," Beer says, mashing Lupo's lips into shape.

He takes his time around her cupid's-bow — that center dip in the top lip — creating a more defined look than the one she sat down with.

"When I get a patient who says, 'I want to look like Angelina Jolie' and they're 65 and they can't pull it off — some 65-year-olds could — I tell them I want to go gently. I do a little at a time. I give them an effect without overdoing it. They can always come back in for more."

But Lupo knows what she wants, slightly fuller lips that look better to her eye.

Beer places the last few pricks of Restylane in Lupo's marionette lines, fleshing out slight creases near her mouth. Three 1 milliliter syringes, 15 minutes and \$1,700 later — if she were a paying customer — and she's satisfied for a few more months.

5

ANTI-AGING TRENDS

Dr. Gary Monheit, president of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery and assistant professor of dermatology at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, points out a few trends:

1

'We're seeing the younger patient who wants less done,' Monheit said.

Women in their late 20s and early 30s are coming to cosmetic dermatologists in increasing numbers. These women want mild treatments and want to begin anti-aging skin care regimens early.

Dr. Mary Lupo, clinical professor of dermatology at Tulane Medical School, recommends vitamin A derivatives, called retinoids, for young women. "The younger you are when you start retinoids, the greater your benefit because it's cumulative," she said.

2

Restylane is the most important filler available today. It's 'the gold standard right now,' Monheit said.

3

Look for **Evolve** to replace collagen; 'I expect you're going to see it in the next year to year and a half,' Monheit said in July of the product that is pending FDA approval.

Johnson and Johnson acquired the rights to Evolve, and Dr. Kenneth Beer of West Palm Beach says, 'It should be a filler that fills a niche in the filler market for people that like the consistency of collagen and want a longer-term fill than present collagens offer.'

4

The new filler buzzword is **Juvederm**. Approved by the FDA in June, clinical trials are under way to compare results of Juvederm with Restylane.

5

Sculptra and fat injections are being used to address the deepest cases of volume loss.

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