

Plastic Surgery

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What is the “best” way to treat facial aging?

Facial aging is a combination of loss of the elasticity of the skin and loss of volume to the face. To achieve optimal correction, you need to address both issues. Loss of elasticity is characterized by loose, excess skin, and this is best treated with a skin excision procedure, such as a facelift, brow lift, or eyelid surgery. The face is divided into three zones. The upper third is from the hairline to the eyebrow, and this is treated with a brow lift. The middle third of the face is from the eyebrows to the corner of the nose, and this area is treated with eyelid surgery (blepharoplasty). The lower third of the face starts at the corner of the nose and extends down to the clavicles. This is treated with a facelift, neck lift, or lower facelift (essentially three ways of saying the same thing).

The volume loss of the face is due to the loss of subcutaneous fat in the face and the fact that facial bones can resorb, making them smaller so they don't fill out the skin envelope like they used to. This is treated by adding back some additional volume to the key areas that have lost their fullness. It is important not to overcorrect the areas of volume loss; otherwise, it will look over-filled and unnatural. The most common fillers that are used are hyaluronic acids (examples are Restylane® and Juvéderm®), calcium hydroxylapatite (Radiesse®), or a patient's own fat.

Patients considering a facelift usually benefit from a combination of a skin-tightening procedure and restoring volume, but not all patients require—or want—both types of treatment. Some patients like the surgical approach and don't want the maintenance of fillers; some patients don't want surgery and want a treatment regimen that avoids the operating room. This is where the patients need to sit down with their surgeon and find the plan that is best suited for them.

What are some additional ways to improve the results of a facelift?

Additional treatments that can improve results of a facelift are Botox®, physician-strength skincare products, and resurfacing procedures such as laser peels and chemical peels. Laser peels use light-based energy to vaporize the outer layers of the skin, creating a smoother texture, reducing fine lines and wrinkles, and reducing skin discoloration. Chemical peels use an acid to “melt” the outer layers of the skin and have results similar to laser peels. Botox will relax the muscle that it is injected into for approximately three to four months. Typically, Botox is used to improve the “crow’s feet” or “smile lines” around the eyes, the frown lines between the eyebrows, and the horizontal forehead wrinkles. Physician-strength skincare products can increase the amount of collagen within the skin, reducing fine lines and wrinkles; decrease hyperpigmentation, evening out skin tone and coloration; improve the skin texture, allowing makeup to go on smoother; and reduce the perceived pore size.

BIO

Dr. Boswell is a board-certified plastic surgeon who has been practicing in St. Louis for more than a decade. Dr. Boswell offers a wide range of surgical and non-surgical options for facial rejuvenation, breast shaping, and body contouring to help patients choose the most appropriate treatment. He has been selected as one of the area’s best plastic surgeons and has been included in “Guide to America’s Top Surgeons,” a resource compiled by the Consumers’ Research Council of America. He has been named to the Best Doctors® list every year since 2007.