

The Best Beauty Breakthroughs

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WRINKLES, AGE SPOTS and saggy skin can sneak up on you. And a glance in the mirror may leave you wondering what you can do to look younger. But while many still opt to go under the knife, more and more women and men are choosing non-invasive, in-office procedures: According to The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, of the 11.5 million cosmetic procedures performed in 2005, a whopping 81% were non-surgical. Why the upswing? Minimal downtime and immediate gratification. Still, it is important to be cautious and to discuss your needs with a board-certified doctor.

Here is a look at some of the latest procedures.

Microdermabrasion

What it does: Smoothes and polishes skin, and promotes collagen growth.

How it works: The process takes about half an hour. A handheld piece resembling a hose or a small iron emits crystals, salt or, in some cases, microscopic

diamond particles, over the surface of the skin to exfoliate. The particles get sucked back inside with the dead skin cells.

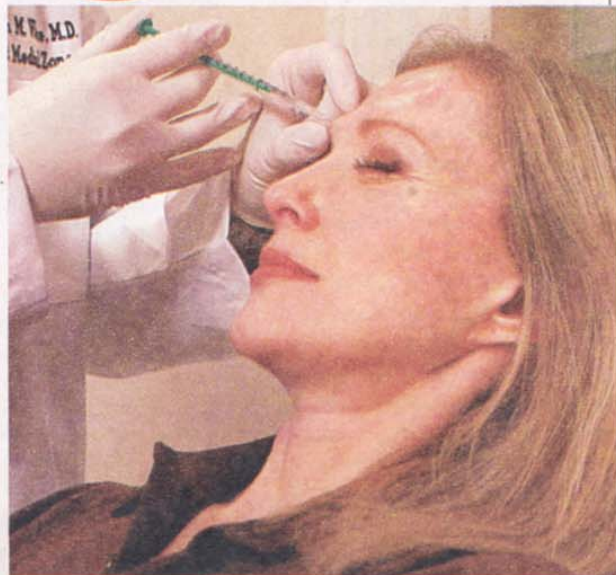
What you should know: Some patients report a feeling of suction, but there is no discomfort. Many doctors suggest ongoing treatments, with at least three spaced over a few weeks to get started. Be sure to use an experienced practitioner, as multiple passes over the skin could leave your face raw.

Cost: About \$200 per area. Check with your doctor—many offer reduced rates when you buy a package of treatments.

Injectables

What they do: Injectables fall into two groups. The first, botulinum toxin type A (aka Botox), “paralyzes” or relaxes muscles so the skin draped over them becomes smoother. Fillers are the second injectable, replacing lost volume in the face by pumping up wrinkles and firming sagging spots.

How it works: It takes three or four days to see the full effect of Botox, and results last three to four months. Among fillers, there are four basic types: One, autologous, is a patient’s own fat removed from another area. “It takes half an hour to remove fat and re-inject it,” says Dr. David Colbert, consulting dermatologist with Cabrini Medical Center and St. Vincent’s in New York. “Then we keep the extra in our bank for up



Target areas for injectables include the forehead, in between brows, around the eyes and the neck.

to three years.” The second type is hyaluronic acid, a natural substance found in all living organisms. The third, bovine-based collagen, requires a skin allergy test. But these are becoming less popular as doctors and patients switch to the fourth type of injectable, human-based collagen fillers.

What you should know: Many people report feeling a slight pinch from Botox. Fillers are a bit more painful, since the needle is usually larger and more of the substance is used. Possible side effects include temporary bruising and swelling. (A drooping eyelid from Botox also has been reported, although it is rare.)

Cost: Varies widely; from \$400-\$1,400 per area.

continued

Erasing the Signs of Aging



BEFORE Pigmented lesions, “marionette lines” and a saggy jawline were undesirable.



AFTER Laser procedures and multiple injectables improved the skin’s surface and shape.

PHOTOS BY MORGAN/REUTERS/CORBIS (BOTOX); MODEL POSED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY AND NEW YORK DERMATOLOGY GROUP (BEFORE AND AFTER)

Lasers

What they do: Non-ablative lasers are intense, focused beams of light that diminish signs of aging like brown spots, acne scars and wrinkles, and help reduce unwanted hair—all without removing any layers of skin.

How it works: Lasers—and similar intense pulse light (IPL) machines—bypass the top layer of skin to treat the layers underneath. “The result is smoother, clearer skin over time,” says Dr. Lawrence Reed, clinical assistant professor of plastic surgery at NY Presbyterian Hospital/Cornell Medical College. The light source alters collagen, forcing deeper layers of skin to tighten and tone. Dark spots lighten as excess melanin is eliminated.

What you should know: Three to six treatments are best for optimal results and the pain level is minimal—many describe a feeling similar to the snap of a rubber band. Some popular names of lasers (and similar light and heat sources) are Fraxel, Thermage and Titan.

Cost: \$300 to \$1,200 per session.

Chemical Peels

What they do: Light peels can refresh dullness, reduce redness, reverse sun damage, even tone and give a healthy glow. Results vary according to the strength, ingredients and how long the peel is left on skin.

How it works: The mixture is painted onto your face with a sponge or brush, avoiding the eyes and mouth. Popular choices are alpha hydroxy acid (AHA), which helps improve skin texture, and trichloric acid (TCA)—especially with dark-skin.

What you should know: Specify that you'd like a “lunchtime” procedure. Other chemical peels cost thousands, severely strip surface skin and require weeks of downtime.

Cost: From \$200-\$800. 