

MAINTAINING THE APPEARANCE OF YOUTH

Putting Your Best Face Forward

With Light, Pixels, Protein and Carbohydrate

BY DR. MARTIN BRAUN



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Aristotle proclaimed, “Beauty is the best letter of introduction,” over 2300 years ago. The Greek philosopher’s observation on our appearance still holds true today. However, with technological advancements in the field of cosmetic medicine, one can maintain and enhance beauty without undertaking major surgery or any significant risk.

The number of non-surgical cosmetic rejuvenation procedures has climbed over 53% since 2000 whereas the number of major cosmetic operations such as facelifts has fallen 19% over the past five years. How can we explain these phenomena?

Sometimes, no matter how young you feel, your face tells a different story. Facial aging, largely due to our obsession with the sun during our youth, leads to a loss of skin thickness and elasticity, manifested by fine lines, deep furrows, broken capillaries, and multiple brown spots. The traditional method of cosmetic rejuvenation frequently involved waiting until about age 50, and then doing something dramatic like a facelift, brow lift, or deep chemical peel or ablative laser resurfacing (removing most of your facial skin leaving you looking like hamburger meat for an extended period of time - assuming you ever achieved normal skin tone again). People disappeared to have their cosmetic procedures, frequently feigning an extended vacation, to reappear weeks or months later with their new face. Of course, everyone around them could immediately see that something had been done.

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The new paradigm of thinking is maintenance, maintenance, and maintenance. Technological advancements in medicine have given cosmetic patients the option of small procedures done on a regular basis to maintain a natural appearance. If you care about how you look, you should start as early as possible and continue throughout life. Today’s well-informed cosmetic consumer has exciting options for procedures that maintain the natural look with minimal risk and virtually no downtime. This can be accomplished with vastly improved laser devices that are extremely safe and do not produce the ashen white mannequin look of years gone by. Very few Canadians wish to look like the women running around Palm Springs with the “Joan Rivers” visage.

The menu of non-surgical cosmetic rejuvenation procedures has become mind-boggling to many patients, and even confusing for physicians practicing in this field. The following is a summary of some of the basic techniques and technologies, which interest the modern consumer.

As our skin ages, it thins with capillaries and veins becoming more visible, along with brown marks known as liver spots or sun spots. These benign red and brown marks can be faded without any



downtime with a simple procedure using Intense Pulsed Light (IPL). When IPL first hit the market ten years ago, the “laser experts” ridiculed the technology, as it is technically not a laser. Now virtually every laser manufacturer makes a decent IPL device, which is used to scan over your face, neck, décolleté, and arms to rejuvenate the skin. Imagine, an intense green or yellow light can fade brown and red spots on your face, and create more radiant skin.

However, this technology can only do so much. If you also have issues with your skin texture, manifested by acne scars, large pores, and fine lines, fractional resurfacing is a good choice. Fractional resurfacing involves a laser making very tiny perforations in the skin, smaller than a pore. These tiny holes are similar to power raking the grass to rejuvenate the lawn. Each of the tiny perforations close in one day generating the formation of new collagen which is the body’s healing response to the microscopic injury. The skin smoothens out and tightens with minimal risk as only 20% of the surface is typically treated when you add up the area of all the tiny perforations. Unlike IPL, there are a few days of red skin (like a sunburn)

following a fractional resurfacing procedure, but you do not have to take weeks off for recovery like the old laser procedures which burnt the entire surface of the skin completely off. An example of a fractional resurfacing laser is the Pixel (NexGen Lasers). There is no pain during the procedure, but the area treated does become red for 1-2 days (like a sunburn). This can be easily covered with makeup. If the procedure is repeated several times, the results are that much better, with minimal risk or downtime.

Unfortunately, repetitive contractions of our facial muscles also cause deep wrinkles and sometimes deep grooves in the skin, despite the best skin care regimen or laser treatments. Now we have a purified protein, Botox that will relax these lines. Botox is the #1 cosmetic procedure in North America. In fact, statistics from the American Society of Plastic Surgery show that all surgical and non-surgical plastic surgery procedures in the United States generated gross revenues of \$9.4 billion last year. Botox injections alone made up \$1.4 billion of that total, exceeding even revenue from breast implants and liposuction. Botox injections are up 388% in the past 5 years. 🍷

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And nothing generates more controversy in the lay press than this Botox phenomenon. Unfortunately there is a great deal of misinformation printed about Botox: “It will paralyze your face,” and “you’ll look like you are wearing a mask,” or “there is no long term data on its safety,” and so on and so on. Botox has been given safely to millions of people for over two decades now. The only thing that a patient in 2006 has to worry about when contemplating Botox for the first time is that it is psychologically addicting! Almost everyone who has received Botox loves the smooth, relaxed look that literally helps relieve the tension of day-to-day life. The uses of this modern day miracle natural medicine expand daily - Botox is now being used to treat enlarged prostates, painful scars, chronic pain syndromes, migraine headaches, and lately even depression. A recent small study showed 9 out of 10 depressed patients felt much better after Botox. Imagine - if you look better, you feel better - who would have thought?

If Botox is the great relaxer, what about a great filler? As we age, we lose fat under the skin of our face. It is truly unfair, that as you enter middle age, if you eat appropriately and exercise in order to remain trim and fit, your face will lack volume. One of the great fillers is hyaluronic acid, which is a carbohydrate. It is the gel that makes up our skin. It is

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completely natural and safe, and is used to plump up cheeks, folds, and lips. Examples of well-known hyaluronic acid fillers are Restylane and Juvederm. European physicians have a huge choice of fillers available to them, and hyaluronic products are still their number one choice.

So if you desire skin color improvement, opt for IPL. If you are willing to be red for 2 days, and have skin textural issues, try a Pixel treatment. If you can only afford to do one thing, try Botox in your brow for a relaxed look and a brow lift. Remember, the brow is everything. Finally, if you wish to recapture the youthful look without getting your skin stretched with surgery, restore your lost volume with biodegradable fillers once or twice a year. Don't feel guilty about investing some money on your face - remember you only have one of those, and it makes sense to take care of it. ■