

**(Parkland Life for July 2010)**  
**Wrinkles Are Worse in Women: Blame the Genes!**

By David J. Levens, MD, PA, FACS

George Washington's wooden false teeth may have marred his famous smile during July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations back in 1776, but odds are his smile was still nicer than Martha's. Why? Because, as new research shows, women are genetically prone to have more and deeper wrinkles, especially around the mouth, than men.

The research study, conducted by a team of plastic surgeons from the Netherlands, was done to obtain new insight into the common perception that women wrinkle earlier and more severely than men.

Here's what the study found:

- Women's perioral skin (skin around the mouth) contains fewer sweat glands and sebaceous glands that secrete an oily/waxy matter to lubricate skin.
- Women's perioral skin contains fewer blood vessels, which could accelerate the development of wrinkles.
- In women, the closer attachment of the muscular fibers around the mouth may cause an inward traction, thereby creating deeper wrinkles.

Fortunately, there are fixes for perioral wrinkles that weren't available in Martha Washington's day.

Lasers, dermabrasion and chemical peels can be used to remove top layers of skin, and build up collagen below the surface, making wrinkles shallower and less noticeable. Botox® or Dysport® injections can be used to selectively weaken muscles around the lips, reducing repetitive contractions that create "smoker's lines" above the lips or "laugh lines" at the corners. Finally, volume can be added with injectable fillers such as Restylane®, Radiesse® and Juvederm™ can be used to fill wrinkles and create a smoother surface. Some can also be used for lip augmentation, to plump up genetically thin lips, or lips thinned by age. Fat injections (using the patient's own fat) are another option, requiring obtaining fat through liposuction (often combined with a planned liposuction procedure). The duration of any of the results can be unpredictable, from months to 1-2 years.

A more permanent lip augmentation solution is using implants, such as with SurgiSil™, a soft, solid silicone implant. A less common surgical option is a lip lift, appropriate when aging has elongated the space between the nose and the notch of the upper lip, or when the upper lip has become saggy with down-turned corners. In other words, many options are available. A Board-certified plastic surgeon can determine which are most appropriate for specific situations.

Now, if medical research could only find a way to fix the gene that makes it so much easier for men to lose weight than women. Until then, there's always liposuction.

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