

(Parkland Life Column for August 2008)

As Summer Wanes, Many Consider “Fine-tuning” their Look for Fall

By David J. Levens, MD, PA, FACS

“Mommy time”: It’s that wonderful mini-season between the start of a new school year and preparations for the fall and winter holidays, a precious month or two when Moms have a little extra time to think about fine-tuning their appearance with rejuvenating treatments for sun-damaged skin, or trying out Botox™ or a facial wrinkle filler, or maybe having some facial or body cosmetic surgery in time to be completely healed by New Year’s.

Let’s start with **corrective skin care**. For such problems as oversized pores, rough texture, discoloration, surface wrinkles, aging and sun damage, corrective treatments might include deep cleansing facials, light peels, dermabrasion, hydrating facials and other techniques. One corrective skin treatment won’t resolve years of damage; repeated treatments are usually needed to re-educate skin cells. Even peels don’t achieve instant results by themselves. Peels can remove the outer layer of facial skin but if the cells beneath haven’t been “retrained” through repeated corrective treatments, the skin will grow back with many of its original problems.

Depending on the nature of the problem, obvious improvement might be seen after a relatively short series of treatments while it can sometimes take many months of regular visits to achieve noticeable results. In either case, early fall is an ideal time to begin treatments if the goal is to kick off the new year with a fresh, revitalized look.

Lip augmentation is another popular “fine-tuning” procedure. Women choosing this procedure are typically aged 35-64 and want to enhance genetically thin lips, or correct thinning and sagging caused by aging. The least invasive and most popular lip augmentation technique today is injection of hyaluronic acid fillers such as Restylane, with results typically lasting 4 months or more. Fat injections (using the patient’s own fat) are another option, but this requires obtaining fat through liposuction (often combined with a planned liposuction procedure) and the duration of the results can be unpredictable, from months to years.

Areas surrounding the lips, such as laugh lines and tiny vertical lines above the upper lip (lipstick “bleed lines”), can also be treated with Injectable fillers, often in conjunction with peels or dermabrasion. BOTOX™ can be used to selectively weaken some of the muscles around the lips, thus contributing to a “pouty” appearance. A more

permanent solution than injectables is surgical implants, using the patient's own skin from other parts of the body, treated donor skin, or synthetic products such as Gore-Tex material. Another option is a lip lift, appropriate when aging has widened the space between the nose and the notch of the upper lip, or when the upper lip has become saggy with down-turned corners. Like lip implant surgery, local anesthesia can be used for lip lifts, but recovery time is longer due to the longer incisions.

Injectable wrinkle fillers can fill in crow's feet and laugh lines, including fairly deep groves. They can be used to plump up sunken cheeks, giving the face a fuller, more youthful look, and create the impression that the facial skin has been "lifted". They require little or no "down time", do not require more than topical anesthesia, do not involve the risks associated with surgical procedures, and produce a very natural outcome. Depending on the material used, the results last from 4-12 months. Botox™ can be used to relax frown lines and crow's feet for up to 6 months.

Surgical procedures like facelift, eyelid surgery, breast augmentation or lift, and tummy tuck provide much longer-term solutions for specific problem areas but, of course, are more invasive, with longer recovery times. Further, they accomplish what less invasive techniques can't—the removal of excess skin and tightening of underlying musculature. While patients can return to work and social activity within days or weeks after most cosmetic surgeries, it usually takes longer to see maximum effect from the procedure. Here are some "maximum effect" timelines: Eyelid surgery 4-6 weeks, facelift 2-3 months, tummy tuck 2-3 months, liposuction 1-3 months, breast augmentation 4-6 weeks, breast lift 2-3 months. Early fall is a great time to schedule such surgeries since recovery should be fully complete in time for the winter holiday season.

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