

Basics of nonsurgical face-lifts

Dr. Anthony Griffin says the key to choosing the appropriate procedure for your goals is to "get through the commercialism."

Look past the glossy brochures and alluring brand names and find out what a technique will or won't do for you. Any credible medical professional should be able to explain the science of a process to a patient. Here are the basics of some of the nonsurgical procedures currently offered:

Acupuncture: Not yet widely practiced in the United States, it appeals especially to those who are health-conscious and unlikely to want a surgical face-lift. Acupuncture needles stimulate muscle tone in the face. Niloufar Gorman of Biovisage says it also spurs collagen production, but some doctors question that result. Biovisage also treats face-lift patients shortly after surgery to reduce pain, swelling and bruising. For an acupuncture face-lift, a minimum of three sessions over three weeks is recommended.

Thermage: A radio frequency device that doesn't abrade the skin like lasers. In a single treatment, it reaches the dermis and shrinks existing collagen fibers, and it spurs the body to generate more collagen, causing more tightening months later. Dr. Robert Rey says the effect may last up to three years.

IPL: Intense pulsed light therapy is done with a topical anesthetic to alleviate the burning sensation. The heat stimulates collagen production, toning the skin. A photosensitizing agent applied to the skin, such as Levulan or Kerastick, can make the treatment even more effective. Chrystal Fernandez of Bellissima Advanced Aesthetics says it is excellent for bringing sun-damage spots to the surface where they dissipate. Deep brown flecks will appear and may last three days. Like most light and laser treatments, it's not recommended for deeper complexions because it can cause irregularities in skin tone.

Yag laser: A laser treatment performed with a topical anesthetic, useful for toning loose tissue and for shrinking fine blood vessels near the skin's surface. The skin feels as if it has been sunburned, which may limit some activities for about 48 hours.

elos: A relatively new treatment that combines radio frequency and light, it aims to treat both fine lines and deeper dermal creases.

Water lift: The skin is abraded with high-pressure water.

Myofascial lift: A mild electric current is applied to the face, tightening up the muscles.

Injected treatments: Botox, or botulinum toxin, temporarily paralyzes facial muscles slightly, reducing the appearance of crow's feet and laugh and frown lines. Brand-name fillers and plumpers include Restylane, Sculptra, Radiesse, Captique and Cosmoderm.



John McCoy/Staff Photographer

Chrystal Fernandez administers IPL and Yag laser skin treatments to Cari Massey to reduce sagging skin.

FOUNTAIN of youth

Lunchtime face-lifts quicker, less painful

By Valerie Kuklenski
Staff Writer

It's not just the terminology — ReFirme, Thermage, elos, Sculptra — that makes the latest wave of facial rejuvenation treatments seem so elegant, so dreamy, so chic and trendy.

It's also a matter of convenience. Procedures promoted as "lunchtime face-lifts" are proving especially popular among those who can't or won't take weeks to recuperate from extensive surgery.

It all adds up to a growing number of adults searching for their own fountains of youth who are bypassing traditional face-lifts in favor of a slew of the latest noninvasive techniques, whether it's

state-of-the-art technological advances or ancient Asian healing arts.

"Especially in L.A., who has time?" said Rose Nadali, co-owner of the Biovisage facial acupuncture clinic in Mid-Wilshire. The clinic specializes in the "five-minute face-lift," that being the amount of time it takes acupuncturist Niloufar Gorman to insert her needles in key points that tone many of the 50-plus muscles in the face.

Early intervention is the key, experts say, in using laser, light, radio frequency and other noninvasive therapies to restore a youthful appearance.

"These are who the best candidates are: people who have early signs of aging, don't want a lot of down time, don't need or want a face-lift," said Dr. Anthony Griffin, a Beverly Hills plastic surgeon seen on ABC's "Extreme Makeover" series and specials. "And they just want something that's going to refresh them a little bit and that's going

to work."

"We're headed toward less and less invasive in pretty much all areas of cosmetic plastic surgery," agreed Dr. Robert Rey of E! network's "Dr. 90210."

"The numbers are kind of shocking. From 2003 to 2004, there was a 43 percent rise in minimally invasive procedures. That is the trend of the future."

Acupuncture for facial rejuvenation is one of the latest ways clients are seeking those results. The effect of acupuncture on facial muscles was first understood centuries ago when specialists were treating Bell's palsy, a condition marked by a temporary sagging on one side of the face. They noticed that the acupuncture area ultimately moved into a higher position than the unaffected side.

Gorman, an orthopedic acupuncturist by training, has spent six years studying the subject of face-lift fields for a doc-



Women get together for a trend in the making: home acupuncture parties. Biovisage in Burbank says it can give five-minute facials to 10 guests in two hours for about \$2,000.

toral dissertation, which is now under review and will be the first book instructing other practitioners in the technique.

"About six or seven years ago, my mom was sitting down, and I noticed her face was falling off, you know?" Gorman said. "The muscles were not tight, she had wrinkles, and I hadn't noticed that before. I thought I have to do something. So I started doing clinical research."

Acupuncture parties

Another trend on the verge: perking up cheeks, brows and chins at home acupuncture parties. Nadali says Biovisage can serve 10 guests with five-minute facials in about two hours' time for about \$2,000. Bye-bye, botox.

Lasers and other high-tech procedures have evolved dramatically in the last couple of years in terms of pain and recovery time. And there are different procedures for different problems.

Chrystal Fernandez, a registered nurse with a Ph.D. in psychology, offers a host of laser and injectable treatments at Bellissima Advanced Aesthetics in Burbank. She says she has trained nurses, dermatologists and plastic surgeons across the country in the laser techniques and skin-care procedures.

She had Cari Massey, a 42-year-old real estate investor from Santa Clarita, in her office last week for a combination of therapies.

She began with a few injections of botox and Restylane, both favorites of the celebrity set. Then it was time to tackle the years of sun exposure Massey has accumulated, as well as

Getting the answers

Dr. Robert Rey's success on "Dr. 90210" has swamped his Beverly Hills office with consultation requests, some from as far as New Zealand.

So he has compiled the key points of his initial meetings with patients in a three-DVD series, "Rey's Anatomy," available individually or as a set at www.reysanatomy.com.

Answers to a wide range of patients' common questions are available through the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery (www.cosmeticsurgery.org).

Dr. Jean M. Loftus, a Cincinnati plastic surgeon and author of "The Smart Woman's Guide to Plastic Surgery," has additional information, including nationally averaged procedure prices, at www.infoplasticsurgery.com.

— V.K.

the loose flesh between her jawbone and throat.

Massey put on small eye patches, and everyone else in the room wore goggles for the IPL — intense pulsed light — treatment that would mitigate her pigmentation irregularities and for the Yag laser treatment to tone her neck.

Staying 'vital-looking'

"I'd rather try to do preventative procedures than go under the knife — that's a scary thing," Massey said. "Plus, I see people who've had things done surgically, and they kind of don't look the same. I'm not unhappy with my appearance. I'm just wanting to stay vital-looking, not so worn out and tired."

Gorman, the acupuncturist, says most celebrities are less inclined these days to seek a complete face-lift. Griffin agrees, noting a spike in his office visits for touch-ups during Hollywood awards season.

"Most of the technology is driven by lifestyle," Griffin said.

"We get patient feedback saying, 'I'm not going through that again because I was off for two weeks.' So a lot of these procedures, they have a very quick recovery, but the trade-off is they don't do that much in a single sitting."

However, quickie facial repairs can be immediately rewarding, while surgical face-lift patients must put up with days or weeks of pain, puffiness and bruising before enjoying their reflections again.

Experts agree that lifestyle is a major factor in deciding when an individual might need a cosmetic procedure and how long that procedure will last.

Hydration, diet, rest, exercise and sun protection all are important to maintaining good facial skin and muscle tone.

"The best way to deal with aging is a little bit at a time, lots and lots and lots of prevention," Rey said, "and don't wait to catch up and overhaul when you're in your 50s."