

# NOT SO PLASTIC PROCEDURES

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The human race has been known to go to extremes in the pursuit of beauty; from powdering the skin with deadly white lead in the Elizabethan era, to injecting liquid silicon into the breasts in the 1960s, often leading to breast amputation from infection or pendulous low hanging breasts. Nowadays, owing thanks to the miracles of modern science, enhancement procedures are much less invasive (and torturous), with the body's natural powers of regeneration giving us new hope.



## There is no doubt non-surgical cosmetic procedures are surpassing cosmetic and plastic surgery as a beauty option.

Today's world of injectable cosmetics was originally inspired by collagen scraped from slaughtered cattle by researchers searching for a solution to damaged human tissue. By 1981, treated bovine collagen was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration as an injectable cosmetic and the rest, as they say, is history.

The 21st century woman now thinks nothing of injecting animal derived products to fill wrinkles or a highly diluted paralytic botulism toxin, Botox, to help 'relax' muscles in a bid to keep ageing at bay. The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery puts Botox as the leading non surgical cosmetic procedure with over two and a half million Botox procedures in the USA in 2009.

There is no doubt non-surgical cosmetic procedures are surpassing cosmetic and plastic surgery as a beauty option. In 1997, just over one and a quarter million non-surgical procedures were undertaken in the USA, compared to over eight and a half million in 2009.

However, there is a growing trend in the injectable world to turn to the body's own chemicals, fat and collagen in a bid to mimic, replicate or recycle the polymers found within our skin. Through fat transfer from the thighs to the face, the injection of the body's own treated plasma and platelets into the skin replicates the body's natural acids. This natural replacement means less foreign substance which means less chance the body will react or reject the injected chemicals.

It can take the average person several weeks of umming and aahing before finally deciding to try cosmetic injections. Originally, the main options were Botox to prevent wrinkles from forming, and Collagen to fill already formed wrinkles. For many, it is a big decision, not just for cost factor but for their own values around beauty and image and

not least for fear of permanently looking as though they were surprised by a wind tunnel.

The use of bovine collagen always requires an allergy test and the instant gratification expected is then delayed by several days for the results. With the new breed of 'natural' injectables, the chance of allergic reaction is almost eliminated.

Hyaluronic acid is a naturally forming biopolymer found within the body that changes as we age. Put simply, it's a sugar that is found in the connecting tissue of the skin and is one of the building blocks of healthy tissue. The acid bonds itself to water and is considered an excellent rehydrator for the skin as well as a filler.

The cosmetic industry found that when a hyaluronic acid bio identical synthetic is injected in different 'strengths' of thickness, it can be used to fill fine lines, plump lip lines, fill facial depressions and emphasise cheekbones. The acid can also be used to treat the décolletage with a series of fine injections designed to eradicate skin creping.

Bronnie Roberts, RN, is the co-founder of North Shore Skin Care Clinic in Sydney, Australia. She has been treating an impressive list of clients for over eight years.

"I have definitely seen a major increase in the number of procedures we are delivering," says Bronnie. "However while we originally went through a trend of clients looking for just one thing, big lips or Botoxed forehead, we now have a new market of people who are looking for a fresher, natural visage and addressing the whole face. We are looking at both facial contouring and skin improvements and you can achieve that through hyaluronic fillers."

Restylane was the first hyaluronic acid in the injectable cosmetic market launched in 1996. Today's Restylane is the most natural hyaluronic acid in the market. With only one percent modification it is used to fill fine lines and is said to last at least double the amount of time of collagen injections before it completely breaks down into the body.

Hyaluronic acid procedures are the second most popular non-surgical treatment behind Botox. The popularity led Restylane's umbrella company, Q Med, to create other hyaluronic acid products including a facial contouring injectable called SubQ which is designed to treat a deeper layer of skin, making it ideal to fill nasolabial folds and to plump cheeks without resorting to surgical cheek implants.

Q Med then went one step further in 2009 with the launch of Restylane Vital Light, a hyaluronic acid product that is used for skin rejuvenation rather than simply filling. Vital literally replaces lost hyaluronic acid from beneath the skin in problem areas such as the chest and the back of the hands, bringing more elasticity to the areas.

"Consumers today are looking for natural and subtle change," explains Q Med Asia Marketing Director, Loretta Yin Wai





Lee. "They want to see immediate results with very little downtime and they want to stay in control of their own look. One of the most appreciated features of Restylane or fillers is that it leaves your body over time, so that you are able to refill and prolong or adjust a little bit because your skin, or your wishes, have changed."

In Australia, the company uses a combination of Restylane, Vital Light and SubQ to create what is often referred to as 'the lunchtime facial' but is officially dubbed "The Natural Lift." In 45 to 60 minutes patients can improve their visage, many claiming losing 10 years in the process, and are generally able to return to work that afternoon with some makeup coverage for needle marks.

Some more sensitive areas, such as the lip line and eye area, may experience swelling that should go down within 24 hours. Either way it is a definite advantage to the weeks of recovery required for surgery. However, like the majority of injectable cosmetic procedures, hyaluronic acid is not permanent but it does have longer results of six to nine months, sometimes more, and can stimulate the body's own collagen to grow and improve.

For those seeking 100 percent natural, you can't go past using your own body fat and collagen. Fat transfer, also known as lipo filling, is exactly what it says: the transfer of fat from one part of the body to another. Most patients have fat removed from the thighs, abdomen or buttocks to use in the face to plump cheeks and fill facial hollows.

The procedure is simple and the good news is the process only takes a local anaesthetic so there is no overnight hospital stay.

Once the fat is removed by a hypodermic needle, it is cleansed of impurities and can be stored for up to five years for future use. The downside is that only small amounts can be used as excess injected fat will not survive, but with fat storage it can be topped up after six weeks. Some doctors recommend very little facial movement or activity in the first few days whilst the fat settles, which can be very difficult when sleeping.

Many dermatologists combine fat transfer with Platelet Rich Plasma therapy, or PRP. This procedure was originally used by the medical profession to treat injured elite athletes looking to accelerate recovery time.


The body's natural platelets, or blood cells, play a vital role in blood clotting and healing. When the skin is cut or traumatised, platelets bind to the cut to stop bleeding and then release growth factors which in turn accelerate the healing process. PRP relies on the growth factors to help build healthy skin from within using the patient's own platelets.

The doctor simply takes blood from a patient, then the platelet rich plasma is extracted from that blood and treated with calcium chloride to activate platelet growth factors and then injected into the problem area such as the face. But it is much more than simply removing blood and reinjecting it, as PRP has a far higher concentration, of 94 percent, of the healing platelets than the body's normal whole blood which contains a mere six percent.

Patients who would take days to recover from laser and skin rejuvenation treatments may find that PRP therapy will not only reduce recovery time but improve final

results. It is also possible to use PRP on its own to improve skin texture and quality.

Bronnie Roberts predicts that "skin quality will be the next big trend. You might have a Botox face with few wrinkles but if your skin is in poor condition or weather beaten, dried and dehydrated, it's ageing. All the big cosmetic injection companies are designing fillers that hydrate the skin as well. I know through experience all of these treatments help stimulate the body's own collagen as most of my patients using hyaluronic acid never return to their original state before the first treatment."

"We are now also looking at the internal hydration of our patients," explains Bronnie. "Management plans address all aspects of a patient's life as stress can have a major impact on the skin. We look at what's going on in their life, their environmental and emotional states and also look from a dietary perspective. If you're dehydrated internally it will show on your skin so we may suggest certain fish oils and other supplements in combination with cosmetic injection treatments." Watch this space. 

#### fact file

For more information on North Shore Skin Care Clinic and Bronnie Roberts  
[www.northshoreskincareclinic.com.au](http://www.northshoreskincareclinic.com.au)

For more information on Hyaluronic Acid  
[www.restylane.com](http://www.restylane.com)

For more information on the Natural Lift in Australia  
[www.revitaliseyourskin.com.au](http://www.revitaliseyourskin.com.au)