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changing

FACES

RED LIPS 2 ©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/PAOLO FLORENDO

ageing is a natural part of life's journey

but thanks to modern science we can slow the visual signs of the ageing process down with some well placed chemicals applied topically or under the skin with injections. With so many cosmetic options on offer it's just a question of how much is too much and when is too late or too soon?

The secret to staying youthful looking is two fold – collagen and elastin. The two important proteins within the body directly impact the epidermis, or skin. Collagen makes up three quarters of the protein in the epidermis and is responsible for a skin's resilience while elastin gives skin elasticity and when combined with collagen keeps us looking youthful. As we age our collagen synthesis slows down and the skin loses resilience and elasticity so if you can keep these two proteins on side then you can keep those ageing wrinkles at bay.

The first signs of skin distress are usually seen in our twenties when 'movement wrinkles' prevail, those laughter lines that add character and generally disappear when you stop smiling. Those same laughter lines become more permanent crows feet in your thirties and the skin may start to pigment and discolour from former sun damage.

Frown lines are likely to appear during this decade and shadows from the nose to the corner of the mouth which will later develop into creases and folds in your forties when the mouth will also suffer from lines. Then it's sagging skin, creping on the décolletage, sunspots, drooping brows and hanging jowls by the time you are in your 50s and 60s. Somebody stop me.

Women used to rely on 'hope in a jar' potions served up by cosmetic companies making the big bucks. We would buy into the fantasy promise of reduced wrinkles and a new life each time we slathered on

overpriced moisturiser. Then along came Botox, botulinum toxin, with much furor. Women, and the cosmetic profession, were split on its age reducing qualities. The truth is, unlike the hope in a jar containers, it did and does what it says it will. It stops the muscles from fully moving, allowing the skin to settle without lines. Whether you like the resultant look is a personal matter, the toxin gets the job done.

We have all seen the images of celebrities that have gone too far in their desire to turn back the clock and capture a past youth. Those sorry looking folk with bulging cheekbones, over fed lips, rigid brows,

Mortality is a hard concept for us to grasp when we are in the prime of our life yet as the years progress the mirror's reality often jolts us from our happy delusions.

arched eyebrows and stunned smile. In the desire to quell their fear they end up looking just that, fearful. Some may have gone too far with the knife, others too jab happy with the hyperdermic.

But when used correctly and without extreme expectations, injectable cosmetic enhancements can take years off a person's visage and restore skin to a plumper more youthful appearance. A combination of injectable muscle relaxants prevent wrinkles from forming and dermal fillers that literally fill in any wrinkles can effectively erase wrinkles altogether. More robust and longer lasting style fillers can lift cheekbones and work the jaw line to change the facial

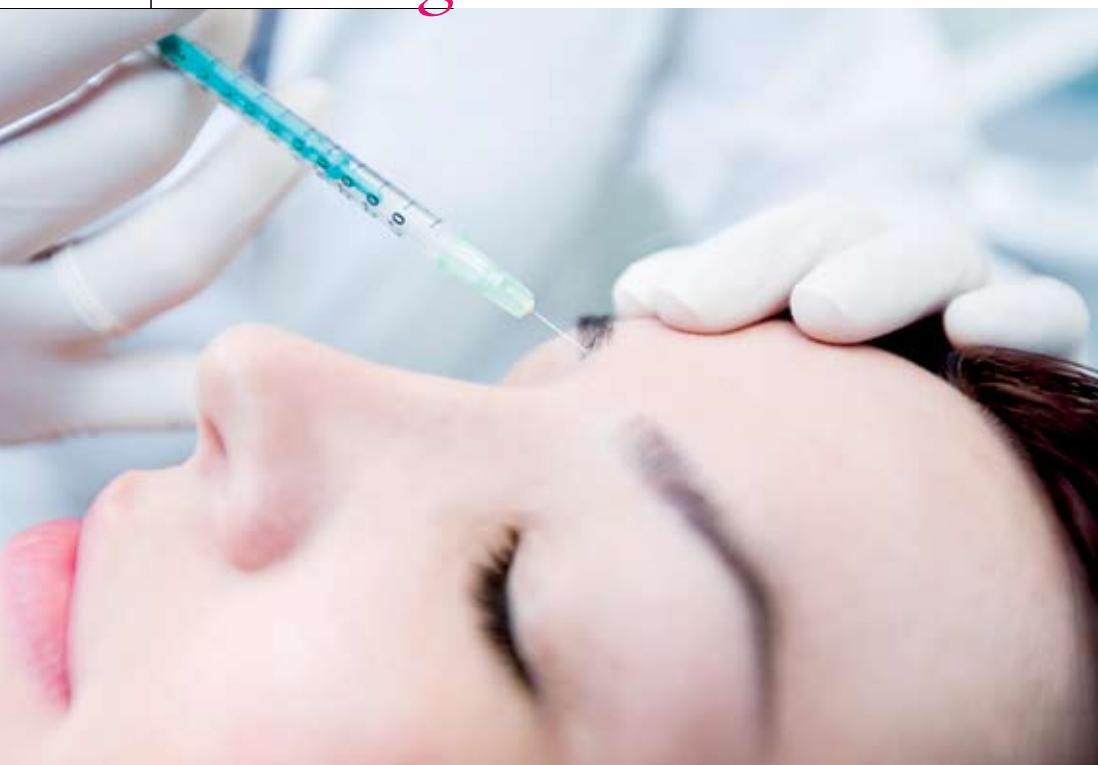
structure as it ages.

New fillers such as Mesolis™ also offer super hydrating powers under the epidermis for areas of creping on the neck, décolletage and back of hands. Combine these injections with laser or photo rejuvenation techniques and the results can be extraordinary if administered by an experienced and certified medical professional.

I am not good with needles, or pain but like most women I am concerned by my ageing appearance. I understand I am getting older and that wrinkles come with that but I don't like how drawn my face is becoming as the muscles drag my face downward with gravity on it's side. It is this concern that has led me to the discreet and hallowed halls of the North Shore Skin Care Clinic in Sydney's leafy Castle Crag.

Set up by specialist plastic surgeon, Dr Richard Barnett MB.BS (Syd.), FRACS, FACS, together with registered nurse Bronnie Roberts, the clinic is a family run business with Dr Barnett's wife, Sue Barnett, manning the reception. The clinic hues are muted and the entire ambience is one of professional understated style which immediately soothes any residual anxiety I am having regarding the dreaded needles.

Bronnie and I discuss the contours of my face and she suggests Botox on the brow line to lift it and open my eyes up. There are a number of depressing muscles that drag facial features southward, including the brow, if you can relax these muscles then



BOTOX TREATMENT ©ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/RENEE LEE

they lose their power to depress the face. I am not keen on a frozen forehead so she dots Botox in a sprinkled pattern to prevent a permanently surprised visage. The key here is natural reduced movement.

The other key is gas. A cylinder of Entonox gas has become my new best friend as I suck on the mouthpiece it dulls the needle pain which is already dulled by the numbing cream that has been applied to my skin. Just in case this is not enough I also have a stress ball on which to cling.

My eye area presents a problem as I have a significant amount of looser skin and established laugh lines. To relax the muscles under here is to risk bunching up the skin even further, so we go for Botox further out from the eyes to still allow movement but reduce the wrinkles in the eye corners. Botox is also used to relax my neck and jaw muscles. My strong neck muscles are pulling my jaw down and a series of injections into this area are expected to bring definition back to my chin.

Esthelis is a hyaluronic acid dermal filler that comes in two forms, Esthelis Basic and Esthelis Soft which is used for super fine lines. Hyaluronic acid is a natural occurring biopolymer within the body and is a major component of skin. The water bonding qualities of this acid ensure that skin remains plump.

The Esthelis Basic is used to fill the

prominent wrinkle in the middle of my forehead. It is a delicate process because it is possible to overfill a line, leaving a ridge of product beneath the skin that would then require daily massage to breakdown over three weeks. Bronnie has a steady hand and a wealth of experience so she knows what she is doing and I am still on the gas so trust her with my life.

A dental block (yes, more needles) numbs my mouth completely and I don't even feel the needle being used to simply fill the outer lip line with the remaining Esthelis Basic filler. I am terrified of ending up with trout pout but Bronnie assures me that this technique merely defines the lips and prevents lipstick from bleeding while also filling in any minor lines around the mouth and will restore my lips to their former youthful glory. She is right though my face resembles a war wound with all these needle punctures.

Finally come my cheekbones. The molecular structure of Fortelis, another hyaluronic acid is more robust than Esthelis and Melosis so it can help with creating volume. Bronnie injects Fortelis into my cheek bones giving them subtle definition. She also inserts some into the naso labial fold in the corners of my nose and in the outer mouth corners to lift and prevent 'mouth frown'. The effects are immediate and very positive. It would be impossible to

overfill the cheekbones without a patient's consent simply because you can witness how much it works straight away.

Twenty four hours later and my lips are swollen from the injections and I fear they are over plumped but this dies down within the next twenty four hours and my mouth is left looking dewy. The enhancement is subtle and lipstick goes on without a need for lip liner, the first time in years. There is some small minor scab like marks along the filled in forehead wrinkle but apart from that so far so good.

It takes a about a week for the full Botox to kick in and while I can still lift my eyebrows and have movement in my face my frown lines have completely disappeared, as has the forehead wrinkle. My filled cheekbones have added volume from the Botoxed neck muscles that have released the skin from my jaw back up to my face.

Six months on and the filler is still working and my lips still supported. The Botox has not lasted as long however, there is more movement in my forehead, not one hundred percent but I can certainly frown more than before.

My friends have noticed a difference, some have picked Botox but I suspect they were looking hard for why I was looking so fresh and alive. No one has picked 'fillers' as the way it has been administered is not obvious, rather an enhancement and restoration than a total new look.

Would I do it again? Definitely, though not everything at once. The Botox on the jaw line felt odd to start and my balloon sized lips in trauma from injections totally freaked me out but once everything settled I was absolutely thrilled. I have never had a result like this from facials or creams and I have no inclination to go under the knife. 🌿

North Shore Skin Care
www.northshoreskincare.com.au
 116 Edinburgh Road, Castle Crag, Sydney
 Botox
www.botoxcosmetic.com
 Esthelis
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