

## Procedures

### Filler

#### What are the issues?

As we age, we change, and our faces change with us. Many changes occur, partly due to drooping with gravity but also due to a gradual reduction in the volume of cheeks and lips. The natural cheek pads sink down leaving hollows above and folds below. Wrinkles develop due to the almost constant contraction of our many facial muscles. A whole negative vocabulary has evolved to describe the unwanted facial features associated with ageing: crow's feet, jowls, lip lines, and marionette lines to name a few. Weight loss, smoking and some medications also accelerate the ageing processes.

Many people see us with specific concerns such as thin lips, flattened cheeks or deep grooves between the cheek and lips. Equally, your concerns may be less specific. Perhaps because of a gap between your appearance and how you feel. Many patients come because they have been told that they look tired or old, when they feel fresh and young.

#### What are the options?

Hyaluronic acid is a naturally occurring substance normally present in our skin and throughout our bodies. It can be manufactured artificially and the molecules cross linked. The leading brands of hyaluronic acid are Restylane™ and Juvederm™.

Both come in a variety of preparations with different properties for different types of wrinkles, folds and hollows. After injection, the duration of effect may last from three to twelve months depending upon the degree of cross linking of the molecules and the site of injection.

Many hyaluronic acid products now come mixed with local anaesthetic which reduces the discomfort associated with injection. Alternatively, local anaesthetic creams or injections can be used before the procedure. Hyaluronic acid is a very effective and safe product and currently the most commonly used product in the non-surgical aesthetic arena.

Polylactic acid is marketed as Scuptra™ or Newfill™. This product comes as a powder and is reconstituted before injection with saline or local anaesthetic solution. It is then injected into the skin in fine lines. It does not fill the tissue itself but stimulates the body to produce collagen or scar tissue. In doing so, it may produce some tightening of the skin. This has led some to describe use of this product as 'a liquid facelift'. We have extensive experience with the use of polylactic acid and have published and presented on the subject internationally.

We have found the degree of volume restoration to be variable and for that reason, within the context of aesthetic enhancement, we generally prefer hyaluronic acid. In the treatment of a condition known as lipodystrophy, we have found polylactic acid to be very useful.

Collagen products from bovine and porcine sources were very popular in the past. However, there is a risk of an allergic reaction and so patch testing is usually performed before using these products. Furthermore, concerns about the remote possibility of prior disease (such as CJD) have made the use of such products much less popular.

Permanent injectable fillers have been used for many years for cosmetic enhancement. Free silicone was used in the 1960s and 1970s. Although silicone implants are safe and effective, the use of liquid silicone injections is associated with a high complication rate. More recently, Bio-Alcamid™ – a synthetic, non-biological filler – has been used for specific medical indications. It too can be associated with complications and we do not recommend its use in the face for cosmetic enhancement.

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Autologous fat transfer is a technique popularised by a New York plastic surgeon named Sydney Coleman and is therefore known as Coleman fat transfer. The technique involves aspirating some fat from an area such as your tummy. This is done through a small incision similar to standard liposuction. The aspirate is then spun in a centrifuge to concentrate the fat cells. These can then be injected into fine tunnels in your face or elsewhere. Some volume will be lost over time but recent groundbreaking research undertaken by our team demonstrates that up to 40% of the volume is retained permanently.

The beauty of fat transfer lies in its simplicity and safety. We are using material that is 100% your own. No foreign material is injected, no manufacturing variables are involved, and there is no risk of allergic reaction.

## What are the limitations?

The use of off-the-shelf injectable fillers such as hyaluronic acid has the advantage of being quick, simple and relatively low risk. However, this is not surgery. The result may well be less effective than what might be achieved with surgery. The injectable product will not give a long-lasting effect. However the procedure can be readily repeated.

## What can the procedures achieve?

A little alteration that does not entail surgery may be all you desire. Equally, you may have found that the expensive creams you have been using have not fulfilled their promise. In this case, an injectable filler may be just what you need.

The exact treatment to suit you depends on your individual concerns and aspirations. For that reason, a consultation with a plastic surgeon who has expertise in the field is highly recommended. We will help you decide the treatment that will benefit you most and achieve the effects you desire. This may be possible through non-surgical means such as fillers and Botox™ alone or together. Alternatively, we may discuss surgical options if we feel your aims cannot be met by non-surgical means.

Typical features for which we might use injectable fillers include thinning of the lips, nasolabial folds, marionette lines (extending from the corner of the mouth downwards), deep frown lines and flattened or hollowed cheeks.

## What are the risks?

You can expect a little swelling and occasional bruising may develop. We will try to achieve the perfect contour but sometimes irregularities may occur. These can be improved with massage.

Injection of polylactic acid produces inflammation under the skin. Occasionally, small white nodules may develop. The inflammation is associated with increased blood flow that may increase the risk of bleeding complications should you undergo surgery in the same area within six months. If you have such injections and are considering surgery, this is best deferred to allow the inflammation to subside.

## What can I expect afterwards?

Cosmetic injections are used selectively to enhance your beauty and self confidence. The effects, if performed well, should be pleasing and subtle. We hope your friends will comment on how well and fresh you look, although they need never know you've had fillers.

## Contact Us

For information and appointments please contact us and we will be happy to help.

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