

Putting Your Best Face Forward

Women find the fountain of youth in cosmetic treatments that press pause on aging skin.

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PHOTOGRAPHY
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We all want the wisdom of age, if only it could come without the wrinkles, right? Treatments like Botox and laser resurfacing offer that with increasing safety and reliability, as well as promising results.

Quick and Easy

"Five to 10 years ago, we had zero [Botox patients], but now they are 10 to 12 percent of our patients," says Dr. Mike Hynes of [Hynes Plastic Surgery Center](#).

Botox is a 10-minute, nonsurgical procedure that smoothes and softens moderate to severe facial wrinkles. Treatment lasts an average of three months, according to Dr. Regina Nouhan of [Monarch Plastic Surgery](#). "But it depends on the size of the muscle, how many units are injected and the body's ability to metabolize the injection. Botox weakens the muscle so that its contracture is not as strong all the time to decrease the appearance of the wrinkle in the overlying skin of the forehead."

Most treatments stop frown lines, forehead wrinkles and crow's feet in their tracks. Some patients also elect to receive Botox around the lips or in the neck jowls, but wherever they want it, doctors will tailor a treatment plan based on individual needs.

Injectable Botox combines a freeze-dried preparation with sterile water. If you are considering Botox, you should learn what dilution your physician uses because this ratio impacts how long treatments will last. "The standard is 2.5 CCs per 100 units of Botox," Dr. Hynes says. "I put 2.5 CCs of water in and [treatment] lasts four to six months." There may be a cumulative effect for some people, in which succeeding treatments last longer.

Dr. Hynes adds that there are "virtually no side effects." Other than bruising from the needle, mild side effects may include temporary localized pain, infection, inflammation, tenderness, swelling, redness and nausea.

Surgical and Longer-Lasting

With facial laser skin resurfacing, including face and neck, "What we want to do is slow down the aging [process]," Dr. Hynes says.

There are several types of lasers your doctor may use. Although the carbon dioxide (CO₂) laser works well, the Sciton Erbium laser is more efficient, offers less downtime and does not turn the skin so red. Both can be used for fractionated or ablative procedures (water vaporizes in the superficial skin so that it sloughs off), and erbium lasers also can be used for non-ablative procedures, which improve skin quality and tightness without sloughing off the outer layer.

Ablative lasers are more aggressive and therefore require more downtime but have faster, more visible results. They will result in varying degrees of temporary redness and peeling of the skin. Non-ablative lasers typically don't result in skin peeling and therefore have minimal downtime but require more treatments for desired results and may not be enough for badly aged or sun-damaged skin.

With the fractionated laser, the doctor introduces thermal energy from the laser in a grid formation. Because the skin between the dots hasn't had treatment, the treated skin heals faster, with a little less downtime. But it won't give the magnitude of results from an ablative laser.

"We like to talk to patients in terms of what amount of downtime they can tolerate and tailor the laser treatments to them," Dr. Nouhan says. Laser [treatment] longevity is very individual. With more aggressive treatments, my guess would be that a patient can get a couple of years out of CO₂ resurfacing. Less aggressive treatments may require more frequent maintenance treatments, at minimum, on a yearly basis."

The non-ablative laser requires no downtime. Fractionated laser treatment requires four to five days, ablative and erbium recovery lasts seven to 10 days, and CO₂ laser recovery takes 10 to 14 days.

Before and After Care

Dr. Nouhan recommends skin pre-treatment, often with Retin-A or retinols, to promote fresh cell-turnover and reduce the dead skin cells the laser would waste energy on, giving a better treatment result. "We also often pre-treat with something to lighten or even out skin tone to help reduce pigment changes after treatment," she says.

A topical anesthetic and possibly a sedative may be used during some laser treatments. Treated skin may initially look severely sunburned, with possible rawness, oozing, blistering, burning or tingling. Patients also must rigorously protect treated skin from sun exposure for at least six months.

After the skin heals in one to three weeks, both physicians recommend that patients use specific skin care products with vitamin C and E, peptides and sunscreen. Patients receive individual skin analysis to determine the best combination of products for them.

Keeping It Real

Kasia Matthews, Hynes Plastic Surgery Center's medical aesthetician, recommends the following skin care products:

Lumiere by Neocutis

This eye cream utilizes Swiss technology with skin proteins, a mixture of essential growth factors, antioxidants, caffeine and peptides. Great for superficial lines, puffiness and dark circles and called a "collagen-plumping" mixture, Lumiere was featured in *InStyle* magazine as a best beauty buy for anti-aging.

PrevageMD by Allergan

Among the top three anti-aging creams, it's a "way to keep wrinkles away" and a "sun damage eraser." It also improves skin texture and promotes skin cell turnover. This physician formula contains the super-antioxidant Idebedone.

Vivier Pharmaceuticals

A product of Canada, this company produces several oil-free, potent anti-aging serums with the Intra Dermal Delivery System, containing antioxidants, vitamin C and E, peptides and hydrolyzed yeast proteins. They treat fine lines, hyperpigmentation and free radical damage.

Phloretine by Skin Ceuticals

The editors' choice in *Allure* magazine and featured on the "Today Show," this is a unique antioxidant blend with vitamin C, collagen booster phloretine and ferulic. Phloretine is used for anti-aging, damage prevention and correction.

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