

PLASTIC SURGERY

Look younger for longer

New skin rejuvenation techniques enable you to deal with blemishes and combat signs of ageing with minimal downtime.



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Traditional techniques of skin rejuvenation involved surgery, but newer technologies and methods have opened up fresh avenues, and there are now many minimally invasive techniques that address skin blemishes and ageing problems without surgery. With little or no downtime, it is easy to see why these techniques have become popular.

Skin rejuvenation is no longer just about reversing the signs of ageing; it is now about making you look healthy, fresh and less tired. It is a continuous process which can start from as early as your 30s all the way to the 70s and beyond. On one end of the spectrum it helps to maintain youthful features and delay the onset of the signs of ageing; on the other end of the spectrum, it can help to reverse some of the signs of ageing that have set in.

Common minimally invasive skin rejuvenation procedures

Different methods address different aspects of the face – the skin surface, the deeper layers of the skin, the muscles, and the supportive framework of bone and soft tissue.

1. Injectables – Fat grafts, Botox and filler injections have been around for many years, and remain among the mainstays of treatment. They are often used in combination.

- **Botox** helps to relax the muscles and hence the lines that form as a result of muscle movement eg. forehead lines and crow's feet. It has a relatively short duration of action, lasting about four months.

- **Filler injections** are injected under the skin at varying depths, and last between six months and two years. There are many types of fillers; different fillers have slightly different characteristics, and are used for different areas of the face. They are used to restore lost

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volume, improve support and 'fill' and smooth out depressions. Common areas for fillers are the cheeks, lips, and nasolabial or smile lines and marionette lines around the mouth. Injecting fillers gives a lifting effect to alter the dimensions of the face, creating a more youthful and less tired look.

- **Fat grafts** are harvested from a patient's body, processed and reinjected. Although about a third of the injected volume is reabsorbed by the body, the rest remains as a natural filler. Fat grafts are most commonly used as an adjunct to surgery.

2. **Thermage** – Thermage uses radio frequency energy to deliver heat deep into the skin. This heating of the deeper layers of the skin helps to regenerate collagen fibres that have become lax as ageing sets in. The heat also stimulates new collagen

production, which continues over about six months. Improved collagen production tightens the skin and makes it firmer. The procedure is done with little or no downtime, and has the advantage of being a one-time procedure – there is no need for repetitive monthly treatments. The effects are seen as a gradual tightening of the skin over

half a year, and lasts up to two years.

3. **Light and laser therapy** – Broadband light therapy and lasers target pigmentation in different layers of the skin. Reduction of pigmentation helps to brighten up the skin, giving it a healthy glow. Laser therapy is also used to treat surface irregularities, as well as improve the appearance of scars.

4. **Skincare and lifestyle** – Although not a procedure, a good skincare regimen is essential for skin rejuvenation. Antioxidant creams, anti-ageing serums and sunscreens help to protect the skin on a daily basis. A healthy diet, exercise and avoidance of smoking will also contribute to healthy skin.

Rejuvenation strategies vary with age

At a younger age, common concerns include surface skin

conditions such as post-acne scarring, birthmarks and pigmentation. Laser and light therapies are best suited for these. Botox is also commonly used for problems such as frown lines, as well as for slimming the jawline. Some young people also have rather flat cheekbones, which contribute to the early appearance of 'eyebags'. This may be treated with injectable fillers in some cases, although others may require surgery.

As we get older, our skin becomes more lax. The supportive structure weakens, and we lose volume in the face. This results in skin and soft tissue sagging, and contributes to facial lines becoming more prominent. The face looks 'tired' or 'sad'. A combination of different treatments including fillers, Botox and Thermage would be ideal to rejuvenate the face without surgery.

Not a replacement for surgery

The main advantage of minimally invasive procedures is the avoidance of downtime. However, a combination of techniques, which target different aspects of ageing, is necessary to give the most optimal outcome. The use of these techniques can help to delay the need for surgical intervention. However, they are not a replacement for surgery, and there will be cases where surgical intervention is necessary to achieve the best results, especially in older individuals.

A plastic surgeon has knowledge of the benefits of both surgical and minimally invasive skin rejuvenation techniques, and is the best person to advise what would benefit you. 

