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## Line Tamers

By Laurie Drake

If this were a secret club, its motto would be, Look rested, not preserved. Not for this group the "wind tunnel" face-lift look (not yet, anyway). Later, though, club members have been letting down their guard. In her autobiography, Dolly Parton admits to collagen injections. On the Concorde, a photographer tells his seatmate how he got rid of his smile lines—with injections of his own plasma. And in a New York restaurant, a Saudi heiress praises the skin plumper Artecoll to her lunch dates.

People who are too wrinkled for Retin-A, yet too young for a face-lift, are talking filling agents. Inject them into crow's-feet, smile grooves, pucker lines, and forehead furrows and the skin rises like dough, flattening the wrinkles. Faces become suspiciously smooth and youthful. Sometimes too smooth, says Los Angeles makeup artist Carol Shaw. "People who are

**Though they're temporary, new skin plumpers fill in the gaps that time and emotion have created.**

overinjected can look puffed and moon-like," says Shaw. "Personally, I'd rather have a wrinkle."

Like a fast-food meal, wrinkle fillers are convenient (they're injected during an office visit), immediately gratifying, and cheaper than a fancy five-course face-lift. And like fast food, wrinkle fillers leave you hun-

gring for more, since their effects are only temporary. The perfect wrinkle filler, of course, would be permanent, painless, and free of side effects. "It doesn't exist," says Arnold Klein, an associate clin-

ical professor of dermatology at the UCLA School of Medicine. Pure liquid silicone came close, say many doctors, but the FDA declared its use illegal, citing such adverse reactions as reddening, swelling, and lumpiness under the skin. "Silicone was like the little girl with the curl," says Klein. "When it was good, it was very good, and when it was bad, it was horrid."

Injectable collagen (called bovine collagen, since it's derived from cowhide) is the most widely used filling agent in the United States. More than 900,000 people have received

it under its trade names, Zyderm (for superficial fine lines) and Zylplast (for deeper wrinkles and scars), says Klein, who uses more of it every year than any other doctor.

Since collagen, like many wrinkle fillers, is injected into the dermis (the deep layer of skin that houses oil glands, sweat glands, and hair follicles), dermatologists often apply a numbing cream beforehand to ease the pain. Although the prepackaged collagen syringes contain an anesthetic, the injection technique calls for serial punctures—maybe 20 needle pricks along a line. "So you can be halfway up the wrinkle by the time the lidocaine takes effect," says Daniel Piacquadio, an assistant professor of dermatology at the University of California at San Diego School of Medicine.

But some people will do anything for vanity. After patients pass the required allergy test for collagen, Klein injects their wrinkles every month until "correction" is achieved. Then touch-up shots are needed twice a year to keep the skin aloft. "There's a certain artistry associated with injecting collagen," says Klein. That could be why so many famous faces seek him out. One of them belongs to actress and author Carrie Fisher. "I started collagen at 30," she says. "Not that I was so wrinkled but

because of the way my face is shaped. It's very round, and the line between my nose and my mouth was pronounced on one side. I was still making movies then, so there was a reason to be vain."

Collagen is injected into a wrinkle through a tiny needle.



Collagen-stoked syringes can be found in many dermatologists' office freezers.

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Collagen is not right for everyone seeking a wrinkle fix. About 3 percent of the population is allergic to bovine collagen, reacting with prolonged swelling, redness, and itching at the test site. And though 14 collagen patients have claimed injectable collagen caused an autoimmune disease and sued the Collagen Corporation (unsuccessfully in most cases), the FDA issued a statement in 1991 saying it didn't find a causal relationship between collagen and autoimmune diseases. Still, collagen cannot be given to people who have an autoimmune disease, such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, as they can be hypersensitive to it.

People under 50 respond better to Botox, says Binder, since younger skin is thicker and springier. But like most other wrinkle treatments, Botox is "technique dependent." Binder believes it should be injected only through a needle hooked up to an electromyograph, which lets the physician deliver the toxin more accurately to the most electrically active portion of the muscle.

Say what you will about members of the wrinkle-free club, they are fearless. Initiation is painful. But, then, pain is relative. Anyone who's had electrolysis on her upper lip may think wrinkle filling is kid stuff.

and they are intrepid, even traveling abroad for fillers not legally available here: to France for *ficelle d'or* (gold thread), to Latin America and Europe for liquid silicone (or the granular form, Bioplastique), and back to France, "where they inject everything but the kitchen sink!" says Arnold Klein. There, the filler du jour is Artecoll (plastic beads suspended in collagen). "But there are problems associated with it," says Klein. "Patients are developing lumps. Remember, you're putting plastic under the skin."

Some of us may want to postpone the decision to erase wrinkles until a filler called hylan gel is approved by the FDA. That is, if we can wait the two years (minimum) the process might take. A form of hyaluronic acid (a natural component of skin), hylan gel can be injected deeply or superficially, depending on the wrinkle; doesn't appear to require a skin test, since allergic reactions have never been reported; and may last for as long as a year. The only drawback appears to be temporary redness and swelling at the injection site. Says Daniel Piacquadio, "Overall, hylan gel holds great promise for this application because of its unique compatibility."

Those who suffer the needle are blessed with a radar of sorts. "I can usually tell if someone has had a wrinkle filler," says Carrie Fisher, "particularly if you know how old they are. You just look at where their lines would have been. It's much easier to spot someone who *hasn't* had their wrinkles filled." ●

Vanity isn't behind every decision to erase wrinkles. Sometimes other forces are involved. In Los Angeles, a forty-something TV host who unconsciously raises his eyebrows as he talks was told by his director, "You gotta stop! All we're looking at is those lines across your forehead!" Injecting of Botox wiped out those lines, says William Binder, an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the UCLA School of Medicine and a pioneering researcher on Botox. Though not a filler, Botox (a trade name for the botulinum toxin) acts on the source of wrinkles by temporarily paralyzing the specific muscles that form expression lines. (The effects of the toxin wear off in three to six months, and then it's time for a booster.)

Botox hasn't been approved for eliminating wrinkles by the FDA, but it is approved for uncontrolled muscle twitches around the eye. Binder cautions that Botox is indicated only for the upper third of the face. Injecting it anywhere else could make it impossible to smile and even cause the lips to droop.