

## **Article Appearing in *Bonita Living***

### **One Plastic Surgeon's Opinion**

**Dr. Elizabeth Fox discusses the latest in techniques and products for looking younger longer**

Innovations in plastic surgery are occurring daily and the speed at which they are approved and announced (and marketed) often does not allow for their clinical benefits to be clearly shown. The prospective patient is inundated with information claiming wonderful results, no surgery, no downtime, and decreased expense, and have nowhere to turn to get the truth. As a plastic surgeon, I am often asked for my considered opinion, and while I know that I can get superb results from doing a facelift, there are other nonsurgical techniques with which I have had great success.

#### **Tissue Fillers**

Tissue fillers such as fat injection (with fat taken from other places on the body), collagen (an injectible bovine material), Restylane™ (a non-animal based injectable made with hyaluronic acid present in all living organisms) and Radiance™, and injectable filler which is made with hydroxyapatite crystals, which are similar to a bone matrix with a protein base to allow for softness of the filler and causes no allergic reaction. In my opinion, the most attractive of these options is the use of Radiance™.

Tissue augmentation just like breast augmentation fills up lax skin, just enough so the lip volume loss, and wrinkles around the face are reduced, to give a fuller more youthful look. By filling in the nasiolabial folds (lines from the nose to the corner of the mouth), and the marionette lines (lines from the corner of the mouth to the sides of the chin), an early facelift can be avoided. In addition, by delicately plumping up the vermilion border (edge) of the lip then the vertical lines on the upper lip can be significantly reduced. Smokers benefit quite nicely from Radiance™ injections around the mouth area.

The difference between tissue fillers is quite significant. Fat injection has a prolonged healing time and the results are not always predictable. Collagen is too short lived (only lasts three months), and has allergic potential. Restylane™ only lasts 4 to 6 months. Radiance™ lasts two to seven years and has been used for twenty five years in the human body, a clinical history which makes me more comfortable with its use. As to cost, Radiance™ requires only one third the cc's to achieve the same effect as collagen and is substantially less expensive when the length of the effects are used as a measurement. Three cc's of collagen would be required for filling and would last 3 months at a cost of \$1350. One cc of Radiance™ would cost \$2750 and last 2-7 years.

Another great benefit of tissue fillers are that the injections can be done in the surgeon's office, have reproducible, immediate results, and apart from possible minimal swelling, have no healing time. The patient is given a "block" and the injection takes only 15 minutes. He or she can go out to dinner that same night and resume their normal activities immediately.

#### **Sciton™ Laser**

There are many kinds of lasers, for hair removal, reduction of the little red capillaries around the nose and on the cheeks (rosacea), for tissue tightening, wrinkle reduction, and removing pigmentation. Lasers are also classified as "ablative" (exfoliating the top layer of skin), and "nonablative" which claims to tighten the skin by stimulating the dermal layers. I am unimpressed with the results of the latter and use, in my practice, the Sciton™ Laser.

The Sciton™ laser is an excellent anti-aging tool with a shorter healing time than the older Co2 lasers and more predictable results. This laser, which is the latest in technology, uses ablation and a small amount of heat to shrink the dermis, thus tightening the skin.

The older Co2 laser caused more damage to the deeper structures as the heat was very strong, thus often pigmentation was affected, and the patient could no longer tan in the lasered area. The Sciton™, a truly

elegant laser, avoids this by only delicately adding warmth to shrink the skin cells without prolonged damage. The effect then is a more natural result with postoperative healing no longer taking months. With sun block and makeup, patients can often resume their normal indoor life in three days and their outdoor activities in a week. Procedures with the Scion™ Laser are priced from as little as \$1500 for the lower eyelids to \$5500 for the full face.

As with all procedures, a patient comes to my office, fills out a complete medical history and is then examined fully. This includes a thorough skin analysis (including a complete check for skin cancer,) a discussion of vitamins and skin care and sunscreens (unless yours is blocking both the 380 and 420 UVA rays, its not sufficient.)

Next, from the forehead down, each portion of the skin is examined and options discussed. For general tightening and "plumping up" of the skin or lines around the lower eyelid, the Sciton™ laser may be recommended. For those lines around the lips, perhaps Radiance™ would be indicated. With either of these conservative procedures, the door is still open to do a larger procedure--such as a full facelift -- later, with no adverse effects.

### **Modern Facelift Techniques**

Facelift surgery has progressed significantly in the last five years. Elevation of the malar fat pad (cheek area) is the most important aspect of rejuvenation. However, the direction of this elevation can mean the difference between natural results, and a "done" look. By elevating these deeper structures the skin doesn't have to support the tissues of the face, thus the facelift lasts longer, and the pulled look doesn't occur. Some plastic surgeons elevate the facial muscles off of the bone from inside the mouth. This tends to distort the facial appearance. By leaving the natural position of facial muscles and elevating all the loose tissue above it, the face can be rejuvenated without redesigning the facial muscles.

Conserving fatty tissue in the face is also extremely important in maintaining soft and pleasing results after surgery. Liposuction of the face is a poor addition to facelift surgery. Repositioning the fat to where it came from is more appropriate. Surgeons used to liposuction the jaw line. and lower face, causing a gaunt look which actually aged the patient. Today, conservation of fatty tissue is very important because as we age, we all begin to lose subcutaneous fat.

Eyelid surgery also has improved significantly. The lower eyelid incision to reduce skin and fat bulging is now being replaced by lower eyelid Sciton™ laser and transconjunctival (inside of lid) removal of the lower eyelid fat bulges. Thus, by not making an incision, the nerves supporting the lower eyelid are spared. Also when removing upper or lower eyelid fat, hollowing of the eyelids is avoided by leaving a small amount of fat to allow for smoothness.

In all plastic surgery procedures, less destruction of tissue, faster healing, and a totally normal appearance are the goals and each is required for a face lift to be deemed successful.

Plastic surgery can range from \$5500 to \$25,000 but cost should not be the deciding factor. When researching your choice of a plastic surgeon, choose one who has kept abreast of the latest innovations and who is dedicated to using safe procedures, resulting in the least downtime and the very best results.

With today's medical advances, there is no reason for anyone to look in the mirror and live with being unhappy with what they see. Plastic surgery, more than being just vanity, promotes positive changes that carry over into the rest of the lives of most patients. As a surgeon, it is wonderful to be part of such a transformation.

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