

Rejuvenation nation; Between Botox and dermal fillers, increasing numbers of patients are opting to forgo the knife for the 'soft lift'

Ottawa Citizen

Sat Mar 5 2011

Page: J2

Section: Life

Byline: Joanne Laucius

Source: Ottawa Citizen

Like geographical features, those rills and valleys on your face have names. The line between your nose and the edge of your mouth? The "nasolabial fold." Those vertical indentations where your brows meet? "The 11." Some names sound a little quaint. The lines beside your eyes are "crows' feet," the hollows beneath them, "tear troughs."

This is the geography of the aging face. Your mother was right: If you keep making a face, it might get stuck that way. These are the features that make you look tired, anxious or grumpy. Even if you don't feel that way.

But growing numbers of Canadians are finding ways to rearrange their facial geography by navigating the middle ground between a facelift and doing nothing. Doctors who specialize in rejuvenation call this non-invasive process, which uses a combination of Botox and dermal filler, the "soft lift."

Compared to even a few years ago, doctors who specialize in this area know a lot more about how the face changes with age, says Dr. Caroline Tosoni, who specializes in medical esthetics at the Synergy Spa and Advanced Medical Asthetics in Orleans.

Advances in dermal filler, laser treatment and Botox make it possible to make patients look younger without going under the knife. For many patients, treatments take less than an hour, with minimal bruising and the immediate satisfaction of hearing colleagues ask if they just got back from vacation.

"There are little things that people don't like about themselves. There are non-invasive things we can do," says Tosoni.

It's not just wrinkles but volume loss that results in that saggy, tired look. Those "tear troughs," for example, tend to become more pronounced as the face loses volume. Fill in the troughs a little and it takes years off a face.

"It doesn't matter if you have great genetics. We all lose it," Tosoni says. "When a patient comes in, they're not going to say 'Fix this line.' They'll say 'I look tired. I look drawn.' "

Two decades ago, plastic surgery was just that -- surgery. But in the past five to 10 years, the largest drug companies have used their research powers to develop non-surgical esthetic treatments, says plastic surgeon Dr. Frank Lista of the Plastic Surgery Clinic in Mississauga.

"The other thing is that the way we're using injectables differently," says Lista. "When they first came out with Botox, people were walking around with frozen foreheads."

The first generation of fillers were usually collagen products from animal sources. Juvaderm, which Lista uses, comes from tissue culture.

"We're not so much injecting wrinkles as restoring volume. We're putting volume back in. Not dramatic, just better. The days of the Joan Rivers look are over."

One of the problems with surgery was the downtime and the cost. Patients needed to take a week or two off while the bruising and swelling went down. The new treatments don't replace surgery, but they can refresh and rejuvenate at less cost.

There are hundreds of muscles in the face, all working together. Lines on the forehead, for example, are created by the muscles needed to lift the brow. Those vertical lines that make you look grumpy are caused by overactivity of the muscles.

By injecting Botox into some of these muscles, the effect of grumpiness is eliminated. The idea is not to paralyse the face, but change the muscle dynamics, says Lista.

Increasing numbers of patients are men and young people -- men because they no longer have to take time off work, and younger patients because small problems are easily corrected without surgery.

"Men are just as vain as women. The difference is that women will get together with friends and talk about it," Lista says.

"There is no 25 year old who needs a facelift. But there are 25 year olds who have the 11 on their foreheads."

A decade ago, about 90 per cent of cosmetic medical interventions were surgical. Now, non-surgical interventions account for about half of the treatments.

Marie, 50, felt that her outside appearance did not match how she felt inside.

The east-end Ottawa consultant and fitness trainer is divorced. She quit smoking and got into better shape, eating right and avoided stress. But even though she was doing the right things, her face "didn't match the rest of me," she says.

After consulting with Tosoni, her first move was to get a Botox injection to ease the "11" marks on her forehead. In the past six years, Botox and filler have become part of her beauty regimen.

"It's a luxury. There's no doubt about it. But it's a matter of choice," she says. "These treatments make me feel good for far longer than vacation."

Friends have never suspected. They tell her she looks rested and like she just got back from vacation.

"I wanted to look healthier and not like I was always exhausted with a permanent frown. Because that wasn't the way I felt. It seemed like all of a sudden I noticed it. I looked tired. I looked mad. It makes a big difference once that disappeared.

"A lot of women want to look better, but they don't want other people to know what they did. It's natural. It's not like Hollywood."

Lista aims to make patients look like themselves, just a little more well-rested and relaxed and therefore a few years younger. He always asks his patients their motivation for rejuvenation therapy.

About half of the people who present themselves for a consultation he chooses not to treat. "We turn down a lot. Their motivation is all wrong," he says. "If a patient comes to me with a picture from a magazine, I'll turn that patient down."

He has turned away patients who do it to re-enter the job market, or because they want to make a splash on the dating scene.

The patient who does not want all of his or her wrinkles gone is the perfect candidate.

"The best patient is always the one who emotionally needs it the least. The one who says 'I love my job. I love my husband. I don't love this little wrinkle,' " he says. "Nobody loses their job or their husband because they have wrinkles. Don't expect a cosmetic procedure to change your life."

Casey Maticiw, 52, has worked in the exterior restoration business since he was 19 and all that wind, cold and sun showed on his face. Still, he never thought about it until he was restoring the exterior of Lista's clinic. They got to chatting. Lista suggested he try Botox. To Maticiw's surprise, he agreed to it.

"Even my friends, they really don't see anything," he says. "That's how subtle it is. It just tightens up the muscles and smooths everything out. I can't see the difference. I have to look at the before picture."

But he had to tell his wife. "How do you hide something like this?" he says. "She'd think I was messing around. I had to come clean."

Maticiw considers his Botox treatments to be part of his overall self-improvement plan, which includes losing weight and swapping his \$30 jeans for hipper clothes. He's even bought Lista's skincare line for men.

He took some ribbing from his friends. "They said some disparaging things. But I'm secure in my masculinity."

Marie says she's not thinking about surgery.

"Not if I don't have to," she says. "I'm not trying to recapture my youth. I was 20 and I don't want to be 20 again. Some of these fine lines I've earned. And I want to keep them.

"It's not about getting facelifts. Facelifts are drastic and expensive and risky. In this case, you're not getting drastic change. The goal isn't to change anything, it's to enhance what you already have.

"It's a personal thing and a private thing. The whole idea is that it's a subtle treatment. I'm not trying to hide, but I'm not going to advertise it, either.

"People put judgments on it. They say it's vanity. Or that you're trying to get a younger guy. If you done the research and have the money, why not?"