

Ask the Plastic Surgeons

By Dr. Wendell Smoot and Dr. John Smoot

Q. *I'm seeking a cost-effective method to reduce the appearance of wrinkles on my face. What are "injectables" and "fillers", what do they do and how long do they last?*

A. Injectable dermal products ("injectables") provide noticeable anti-aging benefits and have many advantages: they are relatively pain-free to administer; provide effective, natural-appearing cosmetic improvements; and do not require hospitalization or excessive downtime. Injections based on a variety of substances play a central role in

the correction of various age-related facial lines, wrinkles and skin folds. Dermal volumizers and filling agents (or "fillers") restore volume and improve contours that are injected below the surface of the facial skin with a syringe, as are Botox, Restylane, Collagen, Perlane and Juvaderm, hence the term "injectables".

Particular injectables have specific functions: Botox immobilizes or "freezes" the muscles that cause wrinkles, such as those on the temple that create "frown lines" or a furrow in the brow. Lines around the corners of the eyes or "crows feet" occur from repetitive smiling or laughing and similar lines are created from the same repetitive motions around the mouth or nasolabial folds. Lines in the forehead are also caused by multiple facial expressions, and as with all wrinkles, exposure to harmful UVA and UVB rays can increase their intensity. Generally, Botox injections last approximately three to six months, depending on the amount of product injected.

Over time, fine surface wrinkles can become deep lines, so the addition of filling agents help to restore volume or "plump up" the skin underneath the crevices. There are a variety of filling agents and the type of product used depends on the desired outcome. The most common are collagen (i.e. Zyderm, Cosmoderm), Perlane, Restylane, Juvaderm, and the newest development to the market, Sculptra, a synthetic, and biocompatible material which the FDA recently approved for the use in correcting HIV-related facial lipoatrophy (facial fat loss). In a clinical study using Sculptra, effects lasted for up to two years after the first treatment session in most patients. Collagen or other hyaluronic acid products provide a soft, natural long-lasting improvement and generally remain effective from six months to a year, depending on the type of product used.

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