

TURNING BACK THE CLOCK

... with **Garth Fisher, MD**
of TV's **'Extreme Makeover'**

WRINKLE-REDUCERS LIKE BOTOX AND OTHER FACIAL REJUVENATORS CAN MAKE YOU LOOK YEARS YOUNGER AND FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOUR APPEARANCE—BUT THERE ARE A FEW THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE GIVING THOSE FROWN LINES AND CROW'S FEET THE DISAPPEARING ACT. READ ON FOR ADVICE FROM PLASTIC SURGEON GARTH FISHER, MD.

I'D LIKE TO GET RID OF THE LINES AND WRINKLES ON MY FACE, AND I KNOW THERE ARE MANY COSMETIC TREATMENTS TO CHOOSE FROM. WHICH SHOULD I CONSIDER?

Wrinkles are permanent structural changes in the skin that are, in most cases, created by folding of the skin during movement or animation, such as smiling and frowning. Wrinkles can be reduced in several ways: by decreasing muscle activity creating the animation—for example, the muscles used to smile or frown (using products like Botox); by filling depressions or creases (using products like collagen, Restylane or fat); or by modifying the skin's surface with laser resurfacing, chemical peels or dermabrasion, among other techniques. One, all or a combination of these treatments may be appropriate for you, but a qualified physician should make that decision based on your skin characteristics.

The FDA has approved a number of fillers, but they do carry some risks: They may harden, migrate or become difficult to remove. Many patients request fat injections. There is tremendous variability with these injections as to which fat will "take" and stay after six months, which carries a risk of permanent lumpiness.

HOW CAN I FIND AN EXPERIENCED PLASTIC SURGEON WHO PERFORMS THESE PROCEDURES?

Choose a licensed and board-certified plastic surgeon or dermatologist who can safely and effectively perform these procedures. It's best to develop a long-term relationship with your doctor so you can achieve more predictable and consistent results.



In addition to appearing on the ABC series "Extreme Makeover," Dr. Fisher is the creator of "The Naked Truth About Plastic Surgery," a five-part series of informational videos on plastic surgery (available online at www.garthfisher.com). He operates a private practice in Beverly Hills, Calif.

These before and after photos illustrate the results of Botox treatments to remove wrinkles.



HOW SAFE ARE THESE PROCEDURES? ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS?

Although minimal, there are risks with any injection, and your doctor should discuss them with you. For example, prolonged swelling, bruising, redness, lumpiness and pain can occur with filler injections. Preliminary skin tests are mandatory before collagen injections to determine potential allergies. Complications of Botox injections are generally limited to temporarily decreased or absent muscle function in unintended areas. And again, for your safety and to lower your risk of side effects, these injections should be performed in a medical setting under the supervision of a physician.

Be sure to tell your physician about all current medications you're taking, and about any allergies and medical problems you have. This information will help your doctor determine which, if any, injections are appropriate for you.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT DURING A TYPICAL PROCEDURE?

Experiences differ, but typically the injection site is cleaned and numbed with a topical anesthetic cream or with injections. After waiting a short time for the numbing effect, the clinician injects the area. The office visit usually lasts 10 to 30 minutes, depending on how many sites are treated.

Patients generally return to work or go home with instructions not to do anything "physical" for 24 hours. They may experience swelling at the injection sites for a full day. This can be treated with ice and over-the-counter pain relievers.

I'VE HEARD PEOPLE WHO HAVE THESE PROCEDURES HAVE TROUBLE FROWNING OR SHOWING EMOTION AFTER TREATMENT. WILL THIS HAPPEN TO ME?

This is usually a result of poorly placed Botox injections. There's definitely an art behind the science, requiring an artistic eye instead of "cookbook" injection techniques. It's important to preserve animation, character and personality while diminishing the signs of aging.

HOW LONG DO THE EFFECTS OF TREATMENT LAST?

The results of these treatments are temporary and usually require follow-up treatments to maintain the desired effect. Botox usually maintains its effect for three to six months, while the filler injections range from two to six months.

Injections are quick and easy and can help patients look younger. One caveat: Become educated and be careful with fillers touted as "permanent," as you might be permanently unhappy with the results.

WHAT LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS FOR FACIAL REJUVENATION DO YOU SUGGEST?

Individual patient treatment plans vary. Generally, these procedures can be used alone or in combination with more definitive and invasive treatments, such as face-lifts, brow-lifts, eyelid surgery and other facial rejuvenation procedures. Talk to your doctor about a plan that's right for you.

