

WRINKLE REPORT

the face between

Smooth foreheads and crinkle-free eyes used to be the hallmarks of an ageless complexion. But now, savvy cosmetic-surgery patients are demanding nothing less than a midface miracle. Ann Hodgman reports.



My twenty fifth college reunion is almost here. For at least fifteen of these past 25 years I had counted on having had a facelift by now. Unfortunately, the operation seemed like such a huge investment of both money and recovery time that I never got around to it. I settled instead for having my official reunion photograph retouched—which, now that my classmates will actually see me, seems like the worst possible direction to have taken.

If I'd known about short-scar facelifts—midface miracles, some would say—I might have been able to avoid all this trauma. In fact, I could have had one as recently as two weeks ago and still be ready to reunite.

Let's talk about the term midface before going any further. The face is divided into three liftable areas: the forehead and eyelids, the neck and jaw, and everything in between. When you consider that the "everything in between" involves the muscles conveying emotion you can see that this area deserves attention. A sagging midface makes the drooping of the mouth and chin more obvious; collapsing cheeks make the lower eye look puffier—all of which betray age even in the absence of wrinkles. In the past we were stuck. The region was too exposed. But now, with slender tools and better techniques,

doctors are tackling the situation directly, thus changing the way we think about age reversal and about the purpose of plastic surgery, too.

I learned this by witnessing a procedure in the operating room of Darrick Antell, M.D., an Upper East Side plastic surgeon in New York who is tall, dark, and preppy, with the perfect complexion all aesthetically inclined doctors seem to have. The patient—who preferred to remain anonymous, so let's call her Sue—was celebrating a recovery from breast cancer as well as an "important" birthday (she wouldn't say which, though I would guess 60). She was poised, smiling, confident—happy, she said, to be having "fun" surgery this time instead of breast reconstruction. A short-scar lift, as its name suggests, involves only half as much cutting as the traditional lift. This means a shorter recovery, local instead of general anesthesia, and an unstretched look. With a traditional lift, the incision

starts at the temple, above the hairline. It creeps down in front of the ear, swerves behind the earlobe, and merges with the lower scalp. (My hairstylist says he can always spot the scars behind the ears of clients who've had traditional facelifts.) In a short-scar lift, the incision is made along the hairline. As Antell says, the results are "very ponytail-friendly."

The surgery happening before my eyes involved very little blood: the incisions looked more like red ballpoint-pen lines than cuts. Instead of simply lifting the skin, Antell repositioned the underlying fat and muscle separately like a carpet pad beneath a rug. With each small tweak, Sue instantly looked years younger. As another plastic surgeon, assistant clinical professor Brian M. Kinney, M.D., of the University of Southern California, later told me:

"We used to think of facelifts as 'I'm loose, so tighten me: I'm looser, so



FROM LEFT: GUINOT PARIS LIFTOSOME, CLINIQUE REPAIRWEAR EXTRA HELP SERUM, CHANEL PRECISION ULTRA CORRECTION EYE.

beauty health & fitness

tighten me some more.” Now it's about volume reconstruction. Right in front of us was this incredibly subtle thing that we weren't appreciating enough. With procedures like the midface incision becoming more commonplace, we have entered a new chapter in plastic surgery. For a decade or so, lasers have succeeded in seducing a scalpel-phobic population into getting their feet wet in the world of cosmetic procedures. But more recently, the surgery part of plastic surgery has been slowly garnering interest among a new population as well.

Until a few years ago, women in their 40s and 50s rarely considered facelifts because they were such big undertakings that many people planned on having only one per lifetime. Now that less-invasive methods have been perfected, patients decades younger than Sue are asking for the same procedure as she is. "The short-scar facelift is definitely appropriate for younger women," says Steven Herman, M.D., a New York City plastic surgeon on Fifth Avenue.

This newer, more youthful plastic-surgery following, in turn, has changed the way we think of what age-appropriate beauty actually is: Just because we are in our 30s and 40s doesn't mean there's no room for improvement—and just because we are in our 50s and 60s doesn't mean we're stuck making do with an "old-looking" face.

The trend is particularly taking off on the West Coast, observes Kinney, who performs the procedure on 35- to 40-year-olds in the entertainment business, hoping to portray characters in their mid-20s. His other patients simply recognize that it's hard to get used to looking older. "They're very comfortable with who they are now [so] they want to have this lift to keep them looking that same way.... They want to have procedures before they're droopy and saggy.

Jen, a 40-year-old Manhattanite, took just a week off for her short-scar lift last year. "I didn't want to get old and have one and then have everyone say, 'Oh, she had a facelift,'" she says. The results, she



FREQUENT STYLING CAN DAMAGE HEALTHY HAIR.

From Left: Phyto Phytocyan Revitalizing Lotion, Rene Furterer Complexe 5 Regenerating Concentrate, Rene Furterer Carthame Intensive Oil Supplement, Leonor Greyl Energising Complex, and Davines Natural Tech Energising Energy Activist Lotion.



claims, were subtle, and yet seemed to have taken ten years off her face. "It's more about maintenance than turning back the clock."

Of course, the technique doesn't fix everything, particularly sagging cheek fat and other more extreme features requiring deeper burrowing. "Try giving one to Jimmy Carter and see what you get," says Fran Cisco Canales, M.D., a plastic surgeon in private practice in Santa Rosa, California, who prefers traditional lifts. These take several hours to complete and can require three months for recovery.

Sue's procedure took 75 minutes, and she went home an hour later. By the next day she had lunch at a bakery with just a scarf on her head. When I saw her a week later, the stitches had already dissolved. "That haggard, drawn look is gone," she said, smiling.

As for myself, I've got a few days before my reunion. Maybe I can still pull it off.

bouncing back Maintaining beautiful—shiny! voluminous!—hair at every age.

Despite worrying over every line on our faces, few of us have thought about how to prevent our hair from aging, too. Beginning around age fifteen, follicles become thinner and weaker, which causes hair to lose elasticity and become drier. Daily sins like blow-drying, flat-ironing, fussing, yanking-not to mention factors like stress, diet, hormonal shifts, and salon bleaching sessions—don't help either, taking their toll on hair long and short, curly and straight. Experts like British trichologist (i.e., hair and scalp magician) Philip Kingsley—the go-to guy for hair-conscious A-listers Kate Winslet and Sigourney Weaver—suggest intensive masks that improve moisture and prevent breakage. Manhattan stylist Harry Josh doles out nutrient-packed Viviscal tablets to clients like Gisele to encourage speedy hair growth. For maintenance in minutes, old-fashioned oil treatments are still the best route to restoring shine, strength, and, as hairdressers love to say, luster.

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