

# Plastic Surgery Lite

Beauty's newest secrets often come in a syringe



By Olaitan Fakinlede

What if you could erase crow's feet, eliminate eyebrow furrows, and soften marionette lines and nasolabial folds all in the blink of an eye? The terms may sound nice, but we're talking about wrinkles. As we age, fat runs away from our faces and stores itself in our hips and thighs. However, there is a multibillion-dollar industry obsessed with aesthetic beauty, cranking out solutions to wage war with Father Time.

Abundant supplies of collagen under the skin are responsible for skin strength and elasticity, and with age, collagen degrades leading to the appearance of wrinkles and loss of the fullness synonymous with youth. To regain your youthful looks you could take out a mortgage to pay for beauty products, or better yet cash in your life insurance for plastic surgery. But with all the latest developments in dermal technology, there is a lighter alternative — injectables. We've highlighted the top shots to combat those troublesome wrinkles.

## Preventing Wrinkles

### Botox Cosmetic

Probably the most famous injectable, Botox was originally FDA-approved for targeting frown lines between the eyebrows; now it's used for every facial wrinkle. Botox (botulinum type A) is developed from a bacterium that targets and paralyzes the release of acetylcholine — a chemical that the triggers wrinkle-causing muscle contractions. Dr. Ricardo Rodriguez, a former professor at Yale Medical School explains that “in about 20 minutes, the bacterium can be injected into specific muscles, fasten to the muscles' nerve endings and inhibit the release of acetylcholine for 3 to 6 months. After that time, the toxin will be subdued and the wrinkles will reappear.”

Common side effects are redness, numbness at the injection site, flu-like symptoms, muscle weakness or drooping of the upper eyelid muscles. Critics claim that overuse can result in a frozen-looking face.

### Reloxin

Reloxin may give Botox a run for its money if approved by the FDA in early 2009, though it's already used in Europe as Dysport. “Reloxin is simply another alternative to Botox and the biggest difference for surgeons will be in pricing,” said New York City plastic surgeon Dr. Scott Glasberg. “If it's cheaper and as effective, it will outsell Botox.”

Reloxin is expected to be approved to target the same areas as Botox, with similar off-label uses. Once injected, reloxin diffuses more than Botox, which means that its injection between the eyebrow furrow may end up smoothing out forehead wrinkles, too. This may create a “more bang for your buck effect” that could sway loyal Botox users.

Possible side effects include flu-like symptoms, redness, swelling and droopy eyelids.

## Plumping and Filling Lines

### Restylane

Approved in 2003, Restylane is the leading favorite for smoothing wrinkles, particularly because it can last more than 6 months. Restylane is a clear gel consisting of soft-tissue filler, made of non-animal derived hyaluronic acid (HA), which adds volume to minimize wrinkles and fine lines. The procedure can take just a few minutes or at most 30 minutes, but since it does not contain lidocaine, an anesthetic added to provide pain relief at the site of the injection, patients need local anesthesia. The hyaluronic acid in the filler adheres to the skin as the water contained in the acid helps to retain volume under the skin's surface. Since the acid acts as a magnet for water, the renewed volume of the skin is easily preserved.

Side effects of Restylane include redness, bruising, swelling and possible nodule formation.

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### Juvederm

This gel implant also includes hyaluronic acid, a natural complex sugar that bolsters skin elasticity and is found in the body's connective tissues. After 6 to 9 months, it is naturally absorbed into the body. The gel exists in 3 formula strengths (18, 24, and 30) to target different layers of the skin. Juvederm 18 is a fluid gel targeting the dermis for fine lines such as crow's feet. Juvederm 24 is a denser gel and goes deeper for moderate lines like forehead wrinkles, or for softening scars and depressions. Juvederm 30 is the densest gel, targeting the deep dermis for grin lines, enhancing lip volume, reshaping cheek contours, and even plumping bony hands.

Common side effects are redness, bruising, swelling, and itching. However, Dr. Glasberg says, "Although Restylane is the more popular HA filler, I prefer Juvederm because it's easier to use and less painful for the patient." More severe side effects include rare cases of nodules, or visible gel lumps and small bumps beneath the skin.

### Prevelle Silk

This is the first of a new line of lidocaine-containing hyaluronic acid fillers. Prevelle Silk was approved just 4 months ago for moderate to severe folds and wrinkles, including nasolabial folds — ridges from the corners of the nose extending straight down to the corners of the mouth. Popular uses have now also extended to the lips for a plumper pout. A very soft, colorless HA gel that flows in easily, this injectable contains lidocaine.

In clinical studies, the most common side effects include temporary injection-site reactions such as swelling, redness, and bumps lasting seven days or less.

## Long Lasting, New Generation Filler-Uppers

### Evolence

This "new generation" facial filler was approved less than a month ago, but has been available in Canadian, European and Asian markets since 2004. Evolence is an advanced collagen-based dermal filler that provides long-lasting treatment of moderate to deep facial wrinkles and folds. A lighter formulation of the filler, Evolence Breeze, is pending U.S. approval for lip enhancement. The results of treatment with Evolence are immediate because it replaces lost collagen with long-lasting, naturally sourced porcine (pig) collagen. Results are clinically proven to last up to a year, which means there is no downtime post-treatment necessary.

Renowned celebrity plastic surgeon, Dr. Sam Rizk warns that, "Sometimes the body may be allergic to porcine or bovine collagen and surgeons need to give a test dose and wait at least a week before performing any treatments with Evolence." Other possible side effects of Evolence are injection-site related and include the development of small areas of firmness under the skin at the treated sites.

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### Artefill

No other filler is as permanent as Artefill. With desired results apparent in less than 6 months, the filler preforms better with time and can last up to 5 years. Approved in 2006 for smile lines, Artefill is used off-label for lip augmentation, acne scars, and more. Essentially synthetic microspheres suspended in bovine collagen, Artefill has been used for over 10 years in Europe and Canada as Artecoll.

Dr. Rodriguez notes that "Artefill's worst side effect is the formation of granulomas — small areas of inflammation in tissue that can become infectious lumps — which have to be surgically excised from under the skin." Another concern is that with aging, the sites of Artefill injection will remain stiff and no longer complement one's facial features. Other side effects include redness, swelling, lumpiness or sensitivity at the injection site. ■

### Flame Broiled:

#### Cutting-Edge Buttock Injections

We can all vouch for the fact that the '90s gave J-Lo's butt superstar status. And with a rumored \$27 million insurance policy for her assets, no one can deny the rising popularity of butt implants. According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, butt implants are still among the fastest growing cosmetic procedure, with a 62 percent increase in 2007, compared to 2006.

However, since implants are expensive, the Brazilian Butt Lift — gluteal injections — has been gaining plenty of exposure. Dr. Ricardo Rodriguez is among one of the few leading butt lift specialists on the East Coast and he explained his method of performing the procedure as similar to liposuction.

"The procedure includes removing excess fat from another part of the body and after a careful harvesting and purifying process in a closed-valve system, the fat is re-injected into the buttocks as donor fat cells. After over 600 tiny injections, a large percentage of the fat cells will survive until eventually they begin to receive blood and then remain lodged in place for the rest of the patient's lifetime." This method has been proven to be an essentially safe procedure with little to no adverse effects.

A special Bioplasty and Surgery Center in Rio de Janeiro does the same butt lift procedure by injecting the glutes of patients with polymethylmethacrylate (PMMA), the main component of Artefill. Most patients fail to realize that the amount necessary to inject PMMA into the butt could cost the patient several thousand dollars. Both Dr. Rodriguez and Dr. Rizk point out the fact that, "PMMA injections into the butt are not FDA approved and highly opposed of by the plastic surgery community. There can be many complications because PMMA is a foreign substance. Over a period of time the body will fight it by forming clumps of scar tissue in order to isolate the PMMA from harming the body. This usually results in infectious granuloma lumps which have to be surgically removed."

