

FACIAL REMODELING

THE THREE ESSENTIAL STEPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL RENOVATION

By: Dr Jon F. Harrell

A good friend of mine once told me that there were three things she appreciated about aging. First, she had learned more about what was important in life and what was not important. Secondly she had learned to accept and value herself more and be less driven by the opinions of others. Thirdly, her perspective on life had developed a depth and richness that only time could bestow. As I was digesting those philosophical thoughts, she continued to say what did bother her about aging. "What really bothers me," she said, "is when I look in the mirror every morning and see someone looking back who is tired and cross looking."

Most of us, if we are fortunate to live long enough, will experience something similar to my friend. When we look in the mirror, we may see the wrinkles, the loose skin, the puffiness, the dull complexion, jowls, flaccid neck skin, etc. that seem to accompany aging. Since most of us think of ourselves as about 10-15 years younger than our chronological age, seeing ourselves as older can be a 'disconnect' between how we subjectively perceive ourselves and how we actually look to ourselves and others.

Today, more than ever, many people are taking advantage of the multitude of treatment options available to roll back time and give themselves an anti-aging makeover. Treatments range from creams to lasers to surgery and all have their place at the right time and for the right individual. However, I break down anti-aging treatments for the face into three main categories. Let's look at these together. You may have concerns about one, two or even all three areas. Knowing where the concern lies can help you tailor your search for treatment more effectively.

DESCENT

This is Newtonian aging – so called due to the effect gravity has on our skin. Over time, the facial skin cannot resist the force of gravity and we perceive the effects as jowls, nasolabial folds, hollows below the eyelids, the 'turkey' neck characterized by a fold of loose skin hanging down the middle of the neck, and perhaps sagging of the forehead skin and eyebrows down onto the upper eyelids. This is the territory of face and neck lifts, brow lifts and eyelid tucks, lip lifts and nose lifts. This is the category of aging that responds to tightening of skin and removal of redundant skin.

DEFLATION

As we've learned more about the mechanisms involved in aging, it has become apparent that there is a gradual loss of volume in the face as we age. There is thinning of the skin and subcutaneous tissue, atrophy of the facial muscles, and even skeletal changes which affect our appearance. These problems are usually addressed by treatments such as dermal fillers, fat grafting and facial implants. This is a particularly exciting field since some of what we used to blame on 'gravity' is actually due to deflation. Modest degrees of skin sagging can frequently be improved by injectables or grafting and occasionally by implants inserted through inconspicuous intraoral incisions. The 'Liquid Facelift' using fat or biocompatible fillers is an example of this kind of approach to treat volume loss.

DISCOLORATION

I find many patients don't realize how much better they can look just by treating the surface of the skin. Facial aging brings with it unwanted

changes such as fine lines and wrinkles, areas of over pigmentation, 'age spots', visible capillaries, and dull lifeless looking skin. A doctor-prescribed skin regimen can frequently make a profound difference in one's appearance. Exfoliation helps the skin to appear smoother and gives it improved clarity. Age spots can be lightened and the texture of the skin improved all without surgery. In addition, there are a variety of 'non down time' laser treatments to further improve skin texture and reduce the visible capillaries many of us still have.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

If you are concerned about aging changes, they probably fall into one of the above three categories. Be honest with yourself as to how much it bothers you, how much your budget will allow you to comfortably spend and how involved you are willing to get. From creams to lasers and on to surgery, there is probably something that you can do to help you look your best no matter what the concern is. Simply avail yourself of the help of a qualified medical practitioner. His/her assessment and suggestions can help point you in the right direction.

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