

Use of Nonsurgical Procedures in Aesthetic Surgical Practice

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Editorial

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With the advent of newer technological advancements in various non-surgical treatment options, the scenario of aesthetic plastic surgical practice has changed significantly. In addition to surgical procedures like breast implant, tummy tuck, face lift, rhinoplasty etc. aesthetic plastic surgeons are now including non-surgical procedures in their aesthetic practice. The concept is to provide the full spectrum of aesthetic procedures to their patients under one roof – without having to refer these patients to another doctor. Common non-surgical aesthetic procedures are–

Botox: A neurotoxin used for injection to reduce fine lines and wrinkles of the aging face. They need to be injected every 6 months or so for continued result.

Fillers: Hyaluronic acid (HA) is the most common filler that is used to replace volume in deflation of certain areas of aging face. They need to be topped up by further injections every few months.

Microneedling: This is a procedure where the skin of aging face (or post acne scars) is treated by a rolling device (Dermaroller) which causes numerous micropunctures using a row of fine needles. This can also be done by using and electrically operated Dermapen. This treatment induced collagen growth in the dermis, but needs to be repeated several times at 10 to 14 days interval.

Laser: The most commonly used are NdYAG and Diodelasers for removal of unwanted facial hairs in young ladies. CO2 laser is used for wart removal and skin rejuvenation (CO2 Fractional), while Q Switch laser is used for removal of pigmented lesions and tattoos. Pulsed Dye laser is useful for treatment of certain vascular lesions like Port Wine Stain (PWS).

Chemical peeling: Is a very common procedure used for facial rejuvenation. Glycolic, Ascorbic and Trichloroacetic Acid (TCA) can be used in varying concentrations, depending on the indication.

Patients undergoing face lift younger than 50 years begin non-invasive facial rejuvenation treatments at an even earlier age. The majority of these patients did not regret the costs associated with noninvasive treatments, even though they saw that face lift provided a greater rejuvenation effect. Plastic surgeons should therefore incorporate nonsurgical techniques into their practice to cater to the needs of the aging patient (ref. 1)

A patient seeking facial rejuvenation, often requires surgical operations like facelift or blepharoplasty; but more often than not, they also need nonsurgical procedures like Botox and fillers. And this has led aesthetic plastic surgeons to offer a variety of non surgical aesthetic procedures in their clinic, or else refer the patient to an aesthetic physician that a majority of the patients who goes to a dermatologist/nonsurgical aesthetician for nonsurgical procedure would choose to go back to him/her for a surgical operation, instead of going to a plastic surgeon. This is because nonsurgical procedures have certain benefits like shorter downtime and faster recovery, less expensive, being non invasive and not requiring anesthesia and hospital stay. Most of patients know that these procedures do not provide lasting results, as compared to the surgical options – and that nonsurgical procedures need to be repeated at certain intervals. In spite of this, recent Global Surveys have revealed an enormous rise in the number of nonsurgical procedures done worldwide, 54.4% increase over the last four years. The report shows a continuing rise in aesthetic surgery with a 41.3% increase over the last four years. The 2021 survey showed a surge of 16.7% and 7.2% in both surgical and non-surgical procedures respectively compared to the 2018 survey (ref 3).

Botox is now the commonest aesthetic procedure with 7.3 million cases done across the globe in 2021 (ref 3). This is 17.7% increase from the last year. Chemical peels were done in 534,831 patients in 2021, which is 49.5% more than 2017 (ref 3). Surgical procedures have also increased worldwide. Liposuction was done in 1.9 million patients during 2021, which is 24.8% higher than the previous year. Breast augmentation was done in 1.68 million patients, with increase of 3.8% as compared with the previous year (ref 3). And Tummy Tuck surgery was done in almost 1 million patients, with an increase of 29.5%. There is well-grounded evidence showing that self-esteem increases after surgery. Majority of the participants stated that they were satisfied with the results of procedures such as Laser Hair Removal, dermal fillers, and Botox (ref. 4).

Even though nonsurgical procedures are considered safe, there are complications that can happen after some of these procedures. Ptosis following botox injections, or blindness following inadvertent intravascular injection of filler injections in the face (ref 5) can be devastating. Training and supervision are therefore very important before anyone embarking on the practice of nonsurgical aesthetic procedures. Following strict guidelines is also imperative to avoid these undesirable complications.

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