

[Ask the Expert]

## How can I slow the effects of aging on my face?



THINKSTOCK



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Many healthy and active aging adults want to look the way they feel.

Luckily, there has been significant progress over the past 20 years in our understanding of the facial aging process, allowing for more sophisticated and tailored approaches to rejuvenation. Treatments such as facial fillers and fat injections, Botox, chemical peels, ablative and non-ablative skin resurfacing, etc., can counteract many of the changes we face. And today's facial cosmetic surgery, with tissue preservation, restoration and

repositioning, provides a much more natural appearance than in the past.

As we age, our facial skin undergoes changes caused by genetic and environmental factors that decrease the elasticity of the dermis and contribute to a loss of collagen, resulting in thinner and more fragile skin. The loss of skin elasticity is especially noticeable around the eyes and mouth, as evidenced by fine wrinkles. And sun exposure causes clumping of the pigment, leading to blotchy mottled skin. In addition, years of gravity and facial animation — smiling, frowning, raising eyebrows — help us develop deeper wrinkles.

It might seem as if there's no stopping nature. When we age, we experience skin senescence (the loss of a cell's ability to divide and grow), atrophy of the deep and superficial fat pads, bone loss, loosening of facial ligaments and structures enveloping our mimetic facial muscles (muscles that move the skin of the face), and gravitational forces contribute to the typi-

cal appearance of an aging face.

But there are newer, more effective treatments for helping you improve your aging skin's appearance.

In your upper face, the aging process in the forehead and brow causes deep forehead wrinkles. The horizontal forehead wrinkles form as we raise our brows in surprise or to improve our peripheral vision, and the vertical wrinkles form as we frown. Most patients in their 40s and 50s can successfully address these changes with Botox, but forehead lifting procedures (through small incisions behind the hairline) are needed as we become older to smooth the forehead and improve eyebrow position.

For your eyes, a saggy upper eyelid skin can be removed through a small hidden incision in the upper eyelid crease. Upper eyelid tendons that stretch with age can be repositioned to raise the upper eyelid. And lower eyelids that become droopy, loose and bulge forward as tendons at-

taching them to bones weaken can be repositioned, a procedure that is commonly coupled with elevating the cheek to address sagging cheek fat.

In your lower face, falling jowls create a poorly defined jaw line. And excess skin, banding, and fat in the neck can obscure normal neck contour. These changes can be reversed with conservative skin removal and repositioning of the deeper lower facial tissues through a hidden incision in front of the ear.

Although many options exist for facial rejuvenation, each has to be weighed carefully in light of your needs and desires. The appearance of sadness, fatigue, anger and surprise from aging is a frequent source of frustration in those of us who still feel youthful and energized. But you have many options to help you delay nature's intentions.

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