

BODY & SOUL

MODEL: CARA, MMA HAIR/MAKEUP: GABRIELLE REINHARD, LYNN SCOTT PHOTO ASSISTANT: DAN MEZICK SHOT ON LOCATION AT THE OFFICE OF HAROLD B. YAFFE

PHOTO BY JAIME DEMARCO

162 PHILADELPHIA STYLE

the quick fix

Non-Surgical Cosmetic Procedures

BY MELODY LESSER

It's been a cold, wet and dreary winter. But before you know it, you'll be purging your closets of cashmere to make way for warm weather wear. The days will get longer, the air will get warmer and the stresses of winter will melt away. In spring, we pare down our wardrobes and bare our best assets. (Are those actually my thighs? Oh hell, I'd sell my soul to be able to cover them under heavy wool right now.) But it's not just our wardrobes that are subject to a streamlining change. Makeup routines lighten up. (Is it my imagination, or is my brow just a tad bit more furrowed this year?) Fingers and toes are treated to pampering. (Is that a new freckle on the back of my hand? That couldn't be an age spot, could it?) Hair care becomes more relaxed. So what if the weather forecast is for a week of April showers? Pull it back into a ponytail and you're good to go. (Ok, now I'm totally depressed. What they say is true. The quickest way to age a face is with a drab smile. This spring I'm going to spring for a little dental detailing.)

I really do hate to be so superficial, but I feel good when I look good and I want to feel good every day. To aid that effort, I have come up with a list of relatively quick things we can do to improve our appearance without taking ourselves out of commission for too long. But first, I need to issue a reminder that although these techniques are non-invasive with little or no downtime for the patient, there still may be some risks involved. Says Dr. Michael Stefan, M.D., P.C., "These procedures are important and let's not trivialize them. It's not surgery, but it's a whole new realm of techniques that have the potential for a lot of harm and good." It's essential to note that the procedures discussed in this article be performed only by qualified, experienced professionals.

SEE THE LIGHT If your concern is brown spots, dull skin and fine lines, you might be a candidate for Dr. Stefan's Luminescence Program, a technique he created to improve the skin's appearance. Much of what we consider to be part of the normal aging process is actually the result of sun damage. To offset this, "We use a system of intense pulsed white light and the YAG laser in combination with a number of other agents, such as pharmaceutical grade cosmetics. This system provides an excellent technique of improving the texture of the face with no down time," says Stefan. The program extends over six months, during which time patients have monthly treatments. "After the first treatment you'll see improvement in reduction of fine lines, as well as in overall skin color. In addition, the laser

tightens the skin. This procedure is recommended for patients in the 20-50 age group. For them, laser resurfacing is a wonderful form of textural facelift. For people with a lot of heavy sagging, a facelift might be recommended. We will also add procedures such as collagen and Botox when indicated."

TAKE IT OFF "Microdermabrasion is a same-day procedure," explains Dr. Algird Mameniskis, M.D. of Rittenhouse Plastic Surgery. "It does not require any anesthesia. A handheld device shoots tiny sand crystals that abrade the skin to help smoothen, improve pigmentation and lessen the appearance of wrinkles." This technique also removes dead skin cells and is said to stimulate the production of collagen. Although certain skin types are at higher risk for scarring, the procedure has "low risks and is pretty safe." The best results from microdermabrasion are achieved after a series of treatments, although some results are immediate. "Eight to ten sessions are recommended for optimal results, depending on what you're trying to correct," says Mameniskis. "Minor sun damage may be alleviated in two to three treatments. Scarring may need more." Patients meet for a consultation, at which time a medical history is taken. Sun exposure and risk factors are evaluated and a course of treatment is discussed. After the procedure, patients are treated to a customized facial and head and neck massage, as well as a hand treatment. There may be some redness, but this fades within a couple of hours. Afterwards, patients are advised to use a daily moisturizer and avoid direct sunlight for two weeks.

Another quick skin-resurfacing technique is Salt A-Peel Macrodermabrasion. "After three to ten treatments you can expect diminishing of fine lines and wrinkles, a tightening of the pores and a blending of skin tone and color," says Birgit Toome, M.D. of Advanced Dermatology, Laser & Cosmetic Center, with offices in PA and NJ. This type of macrodermabrasion reduces the look of sun damage, age spots, acne, fine lines, wrinkles and uneven skin tone.

PLUMP IT UP If a look in the mirror reveals facial wrinkles and creases that don't seem to go away when you stop smiling, you may be a candidate for collagen replacement treatments. FDA approved in 1981, collagen injections, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, were among the top five most popular non-surgical cosmetic procedures performed



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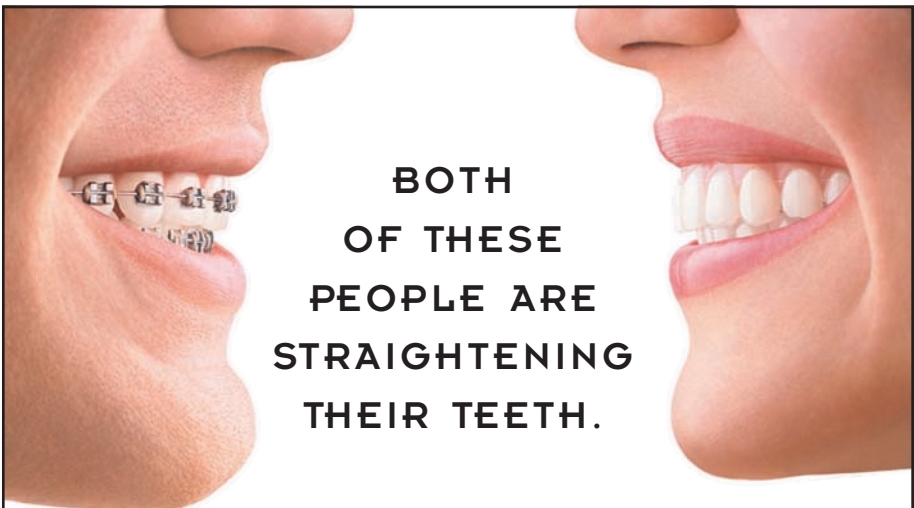
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last year. "Results last from three to six months, depending on the area being treated, and you can see the results before you leave the office," says Toome.

Zyplast and Zyderm collagen, natural substances derived from cow collagen, are injected into the skin to replace the natural collagen lost by your skin over time. Collagen is most effective in reducing the appearance of crow's feet and frown and smile lines. It can also be used to increase the fullness of the lips. Although allergic reactions to bovine collagen are relatively rare, it is nonetheless advised that you have a skin test prior to receiving injections. This is performed several weeks before the procedure.

According to some experts, there is no downtime with collagen injections, though the procedure can be somewhat uncomfortable. Dr. Brett Garber of Garber Plastic Surgery in Cherry Hill, NJ, explains that although a numbing agent comes in the product, there can be soreness during the injections. In fact, many doctors will utilize nerve blocks when injecting collagen into the lips because it can be so uncomfortable. "For other areas, it's not as bad," says Garber. He also mentions fat transfer as another relatively quick fix. "You take a little bit of fat from one area of the body and you can inject it into another area. It lasts up to six months and, although it's not permanent, it lasts longer than collagen. With collagen, the more animated the area, the shorter the longevity." After the donor area has been anesthetized, fat is taken from the abdomen or hips. (Don't get excited. It won't result in any noticeable weight loss because only a minimal amount of fat is removed.) "We prepare the fat by mixing it with saline and putting it through a centrifuge. We transfer that to a smaller syringe and then inject it into the areas we want, like the lips. We overfill the areas because there will be some re-absorption of the fat. And the fat stays where we put it." (Collagen is more forgiving in that the physician can mold it after it is injected.) "There may be more swelling and bruising than with collagen," notes Garber. "But because we use a nerve block, there's no pain." The fat that is not used is stored in a freezer to be used for subsequent treatments. Fat injections are initially more expensive than collagen injections, but because they last longer and use your own fat, over the long run the procedure may end up costing less.

SMOOTH IT OUT According to the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Botox injections were the most popular non-surgical procedure performed in 2001. Botox recently received FDA approval for use on the lines between the eyebrows. Initially intended to treat certain neurological disorders, it was found that Botox reduced the appearance of lines and wrinkles. It has been used successfully to improve the appearance of crow's feet, smile lines, forehead furrows and other facial lines. Botox is most successfully used on the upper third of the face and results last three to four months, although some have experienced benefits for up to six months. Botox works by effectively relaxing facial muscles so they can't contract. It takes several days for the effects of Botox to be fully realized and there may be bruising at the injection sites. In rare cases, there may be drooping of the eyelids or mouth or some loss of facial expression. Certain medications may affect the potency of the drug and may increase bleeding or bruising. As with any of the procedures in this article, Botox should be administered by an experienced, qualified professional.

REFRESH YOUR FACE Fans of *Sex and the City* will remember Samantha's unfortunate experience with a chemical peel prior to her attending a major publicity event. What was supposed to be a little freshening up resulted in children running away screaming when they saw her raw and oozing face. "There are different types of peels," says Dr. Michael A. Tomeo, M.D. of Advanced Dermatology Center in Meadowbrook, PA. After a superficial peel – one that won't have children running away in horror – your skin will be more radiant, rosier and evenly colored and you can resume normal activities immediately.

"Superficial peels consist of alpha hydroxy acids and beta hydroxy acids. Of these, glycolic acid is the most therapeutic," says Tomeo. These are the so-called lunchtime peels, taking about 20 minutes to an hour to perform. Downtime is limited, although patients may experience some peeling for up to 24 hours afterwards. "When you have a superficial procedure, the more risks you take, the greater the benefits," explains Tomeo. "The only downside to these peels is that you're not getting as much of a therapeutic effect as with deeper peels." But then, you're not getting the side effects that Samantha suffered either. (She probably had a phenol peel, which is actually cardiotoxic. In fact, The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery states EKG monitoring is advised while undergoing a phenol peel.) However, the light peels can be repeated weekly or biweekly, so that, after six peels, you've derived the benefits of a deeper peel in a safer way.

The procedure for a superficial peel is simple. After cleansing the face, the physician applies glycolic acid with a cotton applicator. There may be a slight burning sensation. The physician can place the acid close to the eyelid margin, extend it onto the neck, the décolleté and even to the backs of the hands. It stays on the skin for about twelve minutes, after which time the acid is neutralized and removed. The patient can then apply fresh makeup if she wishes and get on with her day. It is recommended that vigorous exercise and sun exposure be curtailed for 24 hours. "Light peels are very safe," says Tomeo. "After six treatments the patient only has to come back every three months for a refreshment session." (These are the same peels that are offered in many salons. The difference, according to Tomeo, is that a facialist's formula contains about 35 percent active ingredients, whereas the physician's formula can contain up to 90 percent.)

IMPROVE YOUR SMILE While you're checking out skin enhancers, don't neglect the importance of a beautiful smile to brighten your

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looks and take years off your face. "The number-one boost that someone can do for themselves is to have their teeth whitened with BriteSmile," says Dr. Harold B. Yaffe, D.D.S. He and his partner, Dr. Paul J. Berson, D.D.S., have done hundreds of these procedures, and "People are giddy about how their teeth look." Ideally, you should have your teeth cleaned about a week before the procedure. "We have a room dedicated to BriteSmile. We like to make this a spa atmosphere, totally comfortable and fun. You can even watch a movie while undergoing the procedure. We put gel on your teeth and then shine a blue plasma light on them. You undergo three 20-minute sessions, one right after the other. Within an hour and a half, you're done." The results are teeth that are five to nine shades whiter than when you started. There may be some sensitivity following the procedure, but this usually disappears within 24 hours. Women are advised not to wear lipstick for 24 hours and all patients are asked to follow a bland, colorless diet for the next day. Patients receive customized trays they fill with bleaching gel and wear for about an hour each month. "Your teeth never go back to the color they were when you walked into the office. But, if for some reason they should within a three-year period, BriteSmile guarantees that the dentist will redo the procedure for half the retail price," says Yaffe.

"Another procedure that can be done easily in one appointment is tooth contouring," explains Yaffe. "Some people have teeth that look a little crooked or are out of alignment. When we contour, we don't move the tooth at all, we just shape it to give the illusion of straighter teeth."

Yaffe also suggests removing old silver amalgam fillings and replacing them with tooth-colored restorations. When silver shines from the inside of a tooth, it gives the tooth a dark gray appearance. By bonding with tooth-colored restorations, teeth appear whiter. And because the new fillings are bonded in, less preparation of the tooth is required so the fillings actually strengthen the tooth. If a gray cast to your teeth plagues you, this may be the perfect quick fix.

And quick is the key. It's spring now, but in just a few short weeks it will be summer and, superficiality be damned, even I haven't figured out how to glamorously emerge from the ocean's foam, skin glistening, hair just slightly windswept, smile radiant and as blinding as the sun. But, self-deprecating humor aside, I'm going to give it my best shot, starting right now.

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If you hate the thought of wearing braces, technology has come to your aid. Invisalign is a teeth-straightening method that utilizes clear removable aligners to perfect your smile without metal or ceramic wires and brackets. Sounding very much like something from the mind of Steven Spielberg, Invisalign relies on computerized imaging to create your smile. After your orthodontist takes an impression of your teeth, a plastic model is made. From this, a three-dimensional computerized image and a movie depicting the movement of your teeth is created. You and your doctor can access this movie and make adjustments via the internet. Invisalign then uses laser scanning to build models of your teeth that reflect each step of the straightening process. The company sends clear plastic aligners (trays similar to those worn for teeth lightening, but made of a more rigid material) to your orthodontist.

"These aligners are changed every two weeks and patients wear them for at least 22 hours a day," explains Julian D. Freeman, D.M.D., of Supersonic Orthodontics, with offices in Philadelphia and Turnersville, NJ. You remove the aligners to eat, brush and floss. If all of this sounds like a bit of a chore, consider this: It's better than wearing a mouth full of ceramic brackets and wires. "The first trays can be slightly uncomfortable," says Freeman. "But after that, none of my patients even flinch. The teeth move week by week, millimeter by millimeter, so it's more comfortable than traditional orthodontics."

Invisalign has several benefits over heavy metal. The obvious one is that it's barely detectable and can accomplish the straightening process in less time than traditional orthodontics. Says Freeman, "It depends on what the patient is trying to achieve. I've had cases where aligning the front teeth takes as little as six months. The real art is that you actually design the case before you even start, so the patient can go online to the Invisalign website and see how the final outcome will look." The cost is approximately the same as traditional orthodontics, but Invisalign is not for everyone. Freeman doesn't recommend Invisalign for those with severely crooked teeth. "It may be the next step in the evolution of orthodontic treatment, but it's not the end-all and be-all." For now, it's a great treatment for those who refuse traditional braces. But who knows what tomorrow will bring? Perhaps we should consult Steven Spielberg. ■

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