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**YOU**

VANCOUVER SUN SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 2017

SECTION F

# THE COST OF BEAUTY

As cosmetic enhancement treatments rise in popularity, experts offer consumers advice on what to know before you go



While some celebrities have been open about their experiences with plastic surgery, others have sparked ongoing have-they-or-haven't-they speculation. Top row, from left: Wayne Newton, Dolly Parton, Kylie Jenner; middle row: Iggy Azalea, Jamie Lee Curtis, Kenny Rogers; bottom row: Lisa Rinna, Sylvester Stallone, Kelly Rowland.

**ALESHA HARRIS**

There aren't many days that go by without a new celebrity plastic surgery claim stealing headline space. "Kylie Jenner debuts suspiciously fuller lips!" "Lady Gaga is 'unrecognizable!'" "New breasts for Selena?"

In addition to being irresistible click bait, the unprecedented levels of coverage — and the resulting speculation surrounding the treatments — have allowed plastic surgery and cosmetic enhancements to become somewhat commonplace.

For example, in Vancouver you can get a mini lip injection on your lunch break. In Toronto, booking a CoolSculpting appointment is a mouse click away.

So just how commonplace are cosmetic enhancements?

The latest data from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) says that more than 15.9 million "surgical and minimally-invasive cosmetic procedures" were performed in 2015, up two per cent from the previous year. (Neither Health Canada nor the Canadian Society of Plastic Surgeons compile statistical data on plastic surgery and cosmetic procedures in Canada.)

The overall number of procedures has risen an estimated 115 per cent in the past decade. That's a lot of alterations.

That mass acceptance — and participation — has prompted an overabundance of salons, medical spas and the like offering services such as dermal fillers, Botox injections and microblading (eyebrow tattooing).

**SAFETY CONCERNS**

So we know they're popular, but are they safe?

"Governmental regulation often lags behind new cosmetic procedures and often takes a long time to institute. This should not be taken as an indication of no risk," says Dr. Vivian Yin, a B.C.-based ophthalmologist and clinical assistant professor in the division of ophthalmology at the department of ophthalmology at the University of British Columbia.

"If anything, more caution should be taken by the general public due to the lack of specific regulations right now."

Relatively new treatments such as microblading and injectable fillers that have rapidly gained popularity on social media and via celebrities are readily available, yes, but are not without potential risks.

"The face is an area with an abundance of blood vessels. When fillers are injected accidentally into a blood vessel, it can cause a blockage leading to tissue death in that area of the face," Yin says of dermal and neurotoxin injections. "Around the eye, it's especially high-risk. Some of the blood vessels in this area are connected with the blood supply to the eye, so accidental injection into these blood vessels has been known to cause irreversible blindness."

SEE BEAUTY ON F2

F2 SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 2017 VANCOUVER SUN

**COSMETIC ENHANCEMENTS: A CHEAT SHEET**

Here's a closer look at five common non-surgical treatments: what they are, who they're good for, potential downsides and what they cost.

**MICROBLADING**

**What it is:** A form of cosmetic eyebrow tattooing that involves the manual application of pigment (ink) in small, hair-like strokes.

**The good:** The treatment should be done by a trained and certified professional only. The treatment can quickly and permanently allow for reshaping and filling of thin, misshapen or missing eyebrow hair.

**The bad:** Needles should be single use and sterile. There is a risk of infection with improper application and post-treatment care.

**The cost:** About \$400 to \$800

**LASH EXTENSIONS**

**What it is:** The application of synthetic, silk or real hair (usually mink or human) to lashes, one-by-one, via the use of an adhesive bonding agent. The lashes can last up to six weeks before requiring a "fill."

**The good:** Lash extensions, which differ from strip lashes in both application process and duration of wear, provide instant length and volume for a more dramatic fringe.

**The bad:** Because lash extensions are applied so close to your eye, it's recommended to have the service done by a trained professional. Improper application can lead to loss of natural lashes due to weight and/or damage to the hair follicle.

**The cost:** About \$70 to \$250

**DERMAL FILLERS**

**What it is:** The use of substances such as collagen to reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, as well as plumping areas of low volume such as lips and under eyes.

**The good:** Dermal fillers represent a relatively non-invasive way to improve appearance with immediately visible results and little downtime.

**The bad:** Injectable fillers should be administered by a trained healthcare professional only. As of June 2016, Health Canada had received 16 incident reports of "facial vascular compromise" after the substance was erroneously injected in or around an artery. In addition, there were complaints about edema, nodules and abscesses.

**The cost:** From approximately \$500 per syringe

**COOLSCULPTING**

**What it is:** A branded body-sculpting treatment of Cryolipolysis that purports to reduce the appearance of fat by targeting fat cells in specific areas and eliminating them by freezing the cells.

**The good:** Billed as an alternative to liposuction, CoolSculpting requires no anesthesia or incisions.

**The bad:** Temporary side-effects include redness, swelling, numbness, localized bruising, stinging and moderate pain. In rare cases, paradoxical adipose hyperplasia, or the appearance of more fat cells in the treatment area, has been reported.

**The cost:** From \$1,500

**MICRODERMABRASION**

**What it is:** Fine micro-crystals or micro-bristles are applied to the skin at high pressure to remove dead skin cells and reduce the appearance of fine lines, acne scarring and hyperpigmentation.

**The good:** When performed by a dermatologist or certified skin care professional, microdermabrasion can reveal softer, smoother skin.

**The bad:** Skin is often red and slightly swollen post-treatment, but typically subsides within a week. Chance of infection if abraded skin is not cared for properly.

**The cost:** Approximately \$80 to \$200 per treatment

**BOTOX**

**What it is:** A branded type of neurotoxin derived from Clostridium botulinum, that is injected into specific muscles of the face in order to reduce the appearance of wrinkles.

**The good:** These types of injections offer a relatively easy and pain-free way to smooth facial wrinkles.

**The bad:** Possible side-effects include swelling, bruising or pain at the injection site, temporary headache or drooping muscles.

**The cost:** About \$15 per unit (For reference, a forehead usually takes between 12 and 16 units.)

# CONSULTATION IS KEY

BEAUTY FROM F1

Other treatments, such as CoolSculpting (a rapid cooling treatment that purportedly kills fat cells by exposure to extreme cold) are so new their long-term efficacy and safety has yet to be fully explored.

"The most common side effects relate to erythema (reddening of the skin), bruising, swelling, sensitivity and pain in the area of treatment," Yin says.

"However, it's important to recognize that there are some more serious side effects."

Allergic reactions to injections, swelling, bruising and pain at treatment site and numbness are a few possible side effects of popular treatments such as microdermabrasion and fillers.

**GO WITH A PRO**

What's the best way to ensure you're in good hands when it comes to treatment? Research, research and more research. And the first place to start is checking the credentials — and past performance — of your chosen practitioner.

"When it comes to injectables there are certain risks that can be mitigated when being treated by a physician who has specialized fellowship training in cosmetic medicine," says Dr. Katie Belezny, a clinical instructor in the department of dermatology at UBC. "Trusting the practitioner you see is important, not only for best outcome with the treatment, but also for reducing complications."

Experts say it's imperative that prospective patients thoroughly research treatments and best practices before booking a procedure of any kind.

And it's especially crucial with the increasing availability of services to ensure the practitioner is qualified and/or certified.

"It is worthwhile to review the credentials of the practitioner and meet with them for a consultation to make sure you feel comfortable proceeding with the proposed treatment plan," Belezny says.

Ideally, skin concerns should be assessed by a dermatologist, especially one with the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada designation of Fellow, before undergoing a procedure.

**MANAGING EXPECTATIONS**

Another area of consideration before committing to a treatment comes with managing expectations — and this is required from both patients and the practitioner.

"When sitting down with my patients in consultation, I first discuss with them their areas of concern, following which I help them by developing a treatment plan tailored to their particular needs," says Dr. Mark Lupin of Cosmedica in Victoria.

"Communication and education are paramount to a successful outcome and a happy patient."



Botox offers a relatively easy way to smooth facial wrinkles, but possible side-effects include swelling, bruising or pain at the injection site. JACQUELYN MARTIN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lupin says taking a photo before and after each treatment is important to remind people of how the procedure has affected their appearance.

"These pre-treatment photographs can be invaluable in the post-treatment period to help manage expectations as we often forget what we used to look like," he says.

"Having before and after pictures can be helpful to see the difference and improve satisfaction."

Lupin says social media has affected people's perceptions and expectations of treatments in recent years — and not necessarily in a good way.

"With social media promoting larger lips and with lack of restraint on the part of many practitioners, there is a valid fear that many patients have of being over-treated," Lupin explains.

"Lips and cheeks are easily overdone. I call overdone lips, the 'Lip-mustest' — if you can tell someone had their lips treated, then do not go there."

Experts also note full results are often not achieved after the first treatment.

More often than not, it requires a slow-and-steady process over a lengthy period to reach the desired look and results, while still appearing natural.

"It is important for patients to have a thorough consultation with their physician up front to make sure they know how many treatments will be required, anticipated effects from the treatment, how long the treatment will last, etc.," Belezny says. "With any treatment, some people are going to be on the lower end of response and others may get a dramatic improvement. So it's important to counsel around that."

**IDEAL CANDIDATES**

So who exactly are non-invasive esthetic procedures such as microdermabrasion, dermal fillers and Botox good for?

"Anyone looking for a little pick-me-up for their skin, whether they are looking to improve the tone and texture, lift sagging skin or reduce fine lines and wrinkles is a good candidate for these types of treatments," Belezny says. "However, not everyone is a good candidate for each of these treatments."

Older patients with what Belezny refers to as "significant photo-aging" or sun damage and wrinkles may not see a dramatic improvement by a more mild treatment such as microdermabrasion. Alternatively, a younger patient may not be a good candidate for

fillers and injections as preventive skin care measures may prove to be a better option.

"There is no optimal age for getting these treatments," Belezny says. "It really depends on the individual and their skin."

Above all, the end result should always be to still look like yourself. Not like the over-plumped faces you're seeing on your smartphone screen.

"I am working on a daily basis to help reorient, refocus and re-educate my patients and my colleagues on providing truly natural looking results," Lupin says. "Looking refreshed — without anyone knowing — that is the true magic."

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