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SKIN

How to Use Filler Without Looking Like You Use Filler

BY JOLENE EDGAR



“[My patients] often have in hand ‘what happened to this celebrity?’ photos as examples of what they do not want.”

Asked what she makes of the disconnect, board-certified plastic surgeon **Haideh Hirmand**, MD, says she suspects the statistical uptick in filler use would be even greater if not for the heightened hesitation she sees around **injectables**. In her New York City office, younger patients are typically the ones expressing fear and reluctance about filler. Not only is this group more tuned-in to the filler firestorm online, but they’ve actually witnessed, in the flesh, filler’s untoward effects. “They’ve seen what’s happened to generations ahead of them,” she explains. “How older people can look a little weird, or how they all look the same in some bizarre way.”

Dr. Hirmand also spoke at length about filler safety, adding that the principle of “do no harm” should extend beyond physical injury to include the aesthetic and psychological damage that can occur when doctors over-inject and “create crazy-looking people,” she says. All too often, she adds, financial gain overshadows ethics, particularly when providers charge by the syringe.

Bring pictures to your appointment

Some doctors will ask to see old photos before injecting filler to get a sense of your original anatomy and face shape. “Even if it’s a young person, I’m going to ask them to bring in photos, so I can see the proportions they were born with and how they’ve changed over time,” says Dr. Hirmand. She typically asks for high school yearbook portraits as a starting point, and then, ideally, pictures from every decade after. “I use the photos not to make a 60-year-old look the way she did in her 20s, but as a tool of investigation,” she explains. They allow her to see: Did you always have thin lips or slightly sunken tear troughs or this particular curve to your cheeks? When enhancing a face with filler, or restoring what’s been lost, maintaining one’s **hallmark features**—the things that make you, *you*—will keep you looking authentic and undone.

Never try to lift your face with filler

During your appointment, “be very clear about what you’re experiencing in the mirror and what you think you might want to have done, so we can assess the feasibility [of your request],” Dr. Hirmand says. Some goals, like **lifting saggy jowls** (the holy grail!), simply cannot be achieved with filler—and blindly pursuing them is futile at best. At worst: “Thoughtlessly shoving product in the face to try to hold it up,” adds Dr. Day, “that’s when people get filler fatigue.”

Only 10-15% of patients coming in for **tear trough filler** are reportedly good candidates. While the shot may seem like an easy fix, odds are, it won’t serve you well, so don’t push if your doctor turns you down. “If we put **under-eye filler** in someone who’s not a good candidate—who has fat bags or loose skin—we will make them look worse immediately,” warns Dr. Hirmand.

“You won’t find me using more than .2 to .5 ccs under the eyes,” Dr. Hirmand adds. “That’s very little filler, but nobody needs more than that around the eyes.”

In older patients, especially, “if you aim to resuscitate the face to the nth degree, they’re going to look ridiculous,” adds Dr. Hirmand. In her experience, a person’s age is always somewhat evident from their eyes, she explains, because the bony orbit changes shape over time, making the eyes look smaller and more recessed. And if the eyes read as 65, she says, but the surrounding skin is lineless and plump, “our subconscious is going to think, Wait, why does this person look kind of strange?”

So while it’s cool to gently accentuate the apples of the cheeks or subtly strengthen a wimpy jawline, “we have to maintain the harmony between the different parts of the face,” adds Dr. Hirmand. “When one part is out of whack, that’s when you can tell something was done.”