



facing the future

NEED AN APPEARANCE BOOST TO SEE YOU INTO THE NEW YEAR? WE'VE IDENTIFIED SOME OF THE BEST FIXES FOR SKIN AND TEETH

WORDS TRACEY STRANGE

THE RANGE OF TREATMENTS falling under the term “appearance medicine” grows with each year. Not content solely with advances in skin care, women continue to look for new and effective ways of minimizing the signs of aging. The goal is less about turning back the clock and more to do with looking as good as possible, regardless of age.

“It’s very rare to find a New Zealand woman who wants to look anything less than natural,” says the new president of the College of Appearance Medicine, Dr Teresa Cattin. Dr Cattin, who specializes in Botox and dermal fillers, says Kiwi women are generally well informed about what’s available and keep up to date with international trends. “They know it’s possible to achieve totally realistic-looking results and have come to expect it,” she says. “I think New Zealanders have a good understanding that procedures such as Botox and Juvéderm are available to slow down the aging process but not stop it completely. They can make you look better – fresher and more relaxed – and when performed by a well-trained doctor they should never look fake. They are there to enhance.”

One of the benefits of appearance-medicine treatments is that they usually offer almost-immediate results. But the cost relative to daily skin care and the reality that they are often performed in doctors’ surgeries cause understandable wariness. Add to this the fact that procedures such as Botox have become almost philosophical choices. Their popularity during a period of environmental awareness that extends to anything we eat, rub or inject into our bodies means it’s difficult to find someone who doesn’t have an opinion on whether or not they are a good thing.

If you are a fan of Botox, it’s probably because you’ve seen or experienced the results. If you’re not, just the thought of injecting a

toxin (admittedly purified) derived from botulism is enough to have you racing for a cup of camomile.

All appearance-medicine procedures carry risks. Toxins, needles, lasers and chemical peels can be the stuff of nightmares. But very rarely. Botox, for example, has been successfully used for decades to treat medical disorders including muscle spasms, crossed eyes, migraines and excessive sweating. It is also far more effective cosmetically than skin care; by freezing facial muscles it smoothes out wrinkles and prevents new ones from forming. You can’t affect muscle movement in the same way topically, nor would you want to. Creams migrate and one that paralyzed facial lines as effectively as Botox does could cause the body serious problems if it spread to the lips or hands.

So what are the most effective anti-aging cosmetic procedures available to New Zealand women and how do they differ from over-the-counter remedies? Here’s an up-to-date summary of some of the best.

BOTOX

Allergan, the maker of the wrinkle smoother, reported an 18.2 percent drop in Botox sales internationally earlier this year but in this part of the world demand for Botox is still very strong. In fact, the Australians are reporting a bumper year for the procedure which is now the most commonly performed appearance-medicine treatment in the United States. But, as always, it pays to be careful. The growing availability of counterfeit Botox continues to be a serious health problem worldwide, so much so that legitimate distributors such as Allergan (Botox) have taken to marking their bottles with a hologram.

COMPETITION: Face creams that claim to mimic Botox’s effects.