



Skin Deep

By Deborah S. Sarnoff, M.D.

ERASING LINES AROUND THE MOUTH: Easy as One, Two, Three

If you give a woman a mirror and ask what bothers her most, nine times out of 10 she'll point to the lines around her mouth. Wrinkles around the lips and mouth area occur as a result of years of facial activity and the aging process, which causes the breakdown of collagen.

In general, a woman's skin is thinner than a man's – men have larger hair follicles and, in some instances, beards and moustaches that protect their skin. Fair-skinned women are especially susceptible to photoaging. Smokers – whose daily habit of pursing their lips around cigarettes – often experience more lines around the mouth, not to mention that cigarette smoke and nicotine also cause aging of the skin. Even a surgical facelift cannot get rid of these pesky lines around the mouth.

So what's a woman to do? Here's a three-step treatment plan I find to be particularly effective:



1. The Quick Filler Fix

The use of injectable fillers for restoring fullness to the skin has increased exponentially. There are many different types of fillers available. For spackling the etched lines on the skin above the lips, it is best to use a filler that is not too thick in consistency. Fillers such as Juvéderm®, Restylane® and Evolence® work well and provide immediate, short-term results. However, buyer beware: Using too much filler or the wrong type of filler can result in a distorted, artificial look, a reason any type of filler should be administered by an experienced, board-certified dermatologist or plastic surgeon. Fillers can also be used to augment the size of your lips.

2. A Bit of Botox®

Botox® is FDA-approved for the temporary treatment of moderate to severe frown lines between the brows. Doctors also use Botox® off-label (a common and legal practice) for other types of cosmetic procedures. For example, small amounts of Botox® can temporarily weaken the muscle around the mouth, which, like loosening a purse string, produces a gentler, more relaxed appearance. When Botox® is used with fillers, it can actually make improvement in wrinkles last longer. Again, it is extremely important to make sure that a qualified professional administers the Botox® – too much Botox® can make it difficult to sip through a straw and can even affect the way you speak. Botox® and fillers “jumpstart” the rejuvenation process, but the key to long-lasting improvement is to add a third component to the mix.

3. A Little Laser Resurfacing

Fractional resurfacing is a cosmetic treatment that uses a laser to remove wrinkles, reduce acne scarring and improve dark pigmentation. A CO₂-based fractional laser – such as the SmartXide DOT®, SmartSkin™, or the Affirm CO₂® – offers long-term results with minimal downtime. These lasers deliver light energy in a stippled fashion, ablating miniscule areas without damaging the surrounding skin. The bridges of skin that remain untouched by the laser are the key to rapid healing. This type of treatment stimulates your skin to produce its own fresh collagen and over time, rejuvenated skin is born. In most instances, the results are long-lasting so often Botox® and fillers won't be needed anymore.

Botox®, fillers and laser resurfacing work synergistically to give you just the right “one-two-three” punch that will put a smile on your face the next time you look in the mirror.●

Deborah S. Sarnoff, M.D., with offices in Manhattan and Greenvale, Long Island, is a pioneer in state-of-the-art cosmetic dermatology, lasers and Mohs surgery for the treatment of skin cancer. A clinical professor of dermatology at NYU Medical Center and in private practice with her husband, board-certified plastic surgeon Robert H. Gotkin, M.D., Dr. Sarnoff has demonstrated her procedures on *The Today Show*, *20/20*, *Good Morning America*, *Dateline*, *The View* and *The Doctors* TV show. Dr. Sarnoff is co-author of *Beauty and the Beam* and *Instant Beauty: Getting Gorgeous on Your Lunch Break*. For additional information, call 516-484-9000 or visit www.cosmetiqueMD.com