



Ultherapy at SkinSpirit lifts, tones, and tightens loose skin to counteract the effects of aging and gravity. Ultherapy directs sound waves deep under the skin, reaching tissue addressed in surgery, which then gently heats the tissue to lift and tighten loose skin. —Photo provided by SkinSpirit

# Looking Natural

By Adrienne Shubin

Unnatural looking plastic surgery is easy to spot, particularly on the face. We notice the tightly pulled skin, the perpetually surprised expression, evident and visible scarring and an overall and obvious operated-on look.

But what about the facelifts and other cosmetic procedures that are so natural looking you don't spot them? They do exist, you just don't notice them!

In fact, many of the newest trends in cosmetic procedures performed to reverse the signs of aging result in a well-rested looking patient, not an artificial looking one.

Thankfully, the one-size-fits-all, cookie cutter facelifts of the past have mostly been abandoned by plastic surgeons in favor of gentler, less invasive options tailored to the patient.

Dr. David E. Marcus, MD, a plastic surgeon in Santa Rosa and longtime advocate of natural

looking plastic surgery, says there is no one formula that is right for everyone when it comes to facelifts. "Procedures are not going to look the same on everyone," he says. "You must consider and respect the person's anatomy."

The latest trends, according to Marcus, lean toward doing more with injectable fillers, both on their own and in conjunction with surgical procedures, to give clients a youthful, rested and refreshed look. These fillers are usually the

patient's own fat or the more commonly utilized synthetic fillers like Restylane and Perlane.

Dr. Dean Vistnes, MD, of SkinSpirit Skincare Clinic and Spa, agrees and says he has seen a paradigm shift in the way surgeons advise their patients. "We are no longer simply treating the aging face with tightening," he explains. "Non-surgical solutions are exploding!"

Vistnes cautions that while injectable fillers can fill lines and wrinkles at a deep level to restore volume and give the illusion of a lift, doctors must be careful not to overfill or the patient runs the risk of looking unnatural. "The purpose of plastic surgery is to restore normal to normal," he says, "less is more, you don't want to look like someone you've never looked like."

Dr. Tancredi D'Amore, MD, FACS, a plastic surgeon in Corte Madera, is also enthusiastic about the use of fillers because as we age, the volume in our faces is reduced. "It's really not gravity that makes us look older," D'Amore says, "it's loss of fat in our faces."

D'Amore says there are promising techniques being developed and used, particularly in the area of fat grafting. Fat



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grafting, or fat transfer as it's also known, is a procedure in which a patient's own fat from another part of the body is injected into the face in very small amounts and in multiple layers. The theory is the transferred fat creates stem cells that will regenerate tissue and help improve the overall appearance of the skin.

While using one's own fat as filler is exciting, as it's a readily available and natural option, Marcus warns that the science is still being developed and refined. "Injecting fat as a filler is a promising technique," he says, "but still somewhat unpredictable when it comes to both symmetry and how long the injection's results will last." The prospect of fat injections is encouraging and thrilling for those who seek the aesthetic benefits of fillers without as many artificial properties.

As far as surgical procedures go, D'Amore points to neck lifts as the newest trend. These days, his patients almost always have a neck lift with a facelift, but some are forgoing the facelift.

"We will often do a neck lift with a Browpexy instead of lifting the forehead, we haven't done a forehead lift in the last 8 years," he says, explaining that a Browpexy

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lifts laterally from the tail of the brow rather than the middle, giving the patient a more natural and refreshed look rather than taut and surprised.

If the forehead needs attention, D'Amore uses Botox. He says, "The main goal is to avoid an operated-on look."

Aside from fillers and surgical interventions, Vistnes recommends treating the skin with focused ultrasound technology, such as Ultherapy, to stimulate collagen production and make skin thicker. He explains, "Ultherapy uses high-frequency sound waves to pinpoint to a specific depth without damage to the skin which means no downtime."

For more natural looking and longer lasting results, Vistnes suggests starting sooner rather than later and have minor cosmetic procedures in your 30s and 40s every couple of years. In your 50s, consider surgery to extend the life of the procedures and prolong your results.

With many surgical and non-surgical cosmetic procedures available today, it's possible to achieve a more youthful, rested and refreshed look without looking like you've had anything done. It'll be a secret that's easy to keep! ■

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