

# The beauty of time travel

A few relatively non-invasive treatments later, nature's course is reversed.

By Aubrey Tait



News that I was getting a head-to-toe med spa makeover sent my husband into a joyous debate about the benefits of C cups over double Fs.

Yet the frat-boy gleam in his eye dulled when I told him the procedures I'd undergo were non-invasive, meaning "knife-free."

This was good news for a 35-year-old who fantasized of a bloodless way to erase the lines, marks and padding that some describe as "character." But would you rather be a character from *Lipstick Jungle* ... or *The Golden Girls*?

That's why med spas — businesses which offer non-invasive cosmetic procedures that take no longer than the average lunch hour — have exploded in popularity. All types, from late twenty-somethings to Baby Boomers, are getting Botox, dermal fillers, photofacials and other treatments that smooth, firm, plump, reduce or erase.

"They want to look as young as they feel," says Lisa Espinoza, M.D., who runs La Chelé Medical Aesthetics at Zanya Spa/Salon in Lambertville, NJ, noting that the aging population is now more active than ever.

Prevention is yet another force behind the throngs of med spa devotees. Rather than deem the younger set as Hollywood-obsessed for getting preventative cosmetic procedures, Dr. Espinoza (known around Zanya as "Dr. E") considers it one way to avoid a costly face-lift in the future.

But even the phrase "face-lift" is getting lost in the newest wrinkle of the cosmetic time-machine, which is to add youthful volume to the face rather than hollow it out by stretching and cutting.

Which brings us back to the non-invasive concept — not only are procedures at La Chelé knife-free but they're performed by Dr. E, a physician with degrees from the University of Southern California and the Drexel University College of Medicine. At a very young age, she struggled with acne that left her face scarred but her career path clear. Says Dr. E, "I developed a passion for skin health and its importance to self-esteem."

## Photofacial

We started with a photofacial, a process in which intense, pulsed light is aimed into various points in the dermis to eradicate redness



caused by rosacea, spider veins and dark spots brought on by exposure to the sun. The pulses, which took about 20 minutes to complete, felt like the snap of a rubber band.

**Results:** Immediately, the spider veins were completely gone. Within a few days, my normally fair-to-slightly ruddy face sported an even tone and peachy softness, and after a few follow-up treatments, my sun-spotted chest and hands took on a creamy appearance. Making this even more beautiful is that photofacials don't require regular upkeep. Once the damage is zapped, it's gone.



#### Botox

Getting Botox would involve the injection of Botulinum Toxin Type A, via needle, in various points. The substance freezes the muscles — the constant moving of which had formed the horizontal creases that traversed my forehead and the wrinkles fanning out around my eyes — for about three to four months. As for my lips, the Botox would produce a fetching pout.

On Botox day, Dr. E started out by showing me a diagram of muscles in the face. While some doctors charge by the number of shots to each muscle, which vary in size and number with each person, Dr. E charges by unit.

The shots felt like mild pin pricks.

**Results:** In about three days, the creases had diminished considerably, my eyebrows arched ravishingly and my upper lip had developed a subtle, delicious upturn.

#### VelaShape

VelaShape is not a weight-loss tool, and it won't help the obese. But it would tackle some of the unsightly padding on my tummy, Dr. E assured.

Cellulite, the cottage cheesy-looking fat that dimples thighs, hips and bellies, is comprised of clumps of fat trapped in a mesh-like membrane below the skin. VelaShape utilizes a trio of mechanisms, heat, infrared light and mechanical suction to break up the mesh and encourage lymphatic drainage. The machine both looks and feels like a vacuum cleaner, but the result is circumference-reduction and cellulite-smoothing.

**Results:** The next day, my pants fit better. By the end of the third treatment, I was able to tug on my skinny pants. And, after the sixth, my abdominal muscles introduced themselves to me. The tape measure confirmed an inch lost from my waist.

#### Juvéderm

When we age, we lose the volume provided by the natural layer of hyaluronic acid in our skin tissue. The solution is a dermal filler, like Juvéderm, a hyaluronic acid in gel form that lasts around nine to 12 months. The aim was to attack the deep "parentheses" that flanked my mouth.

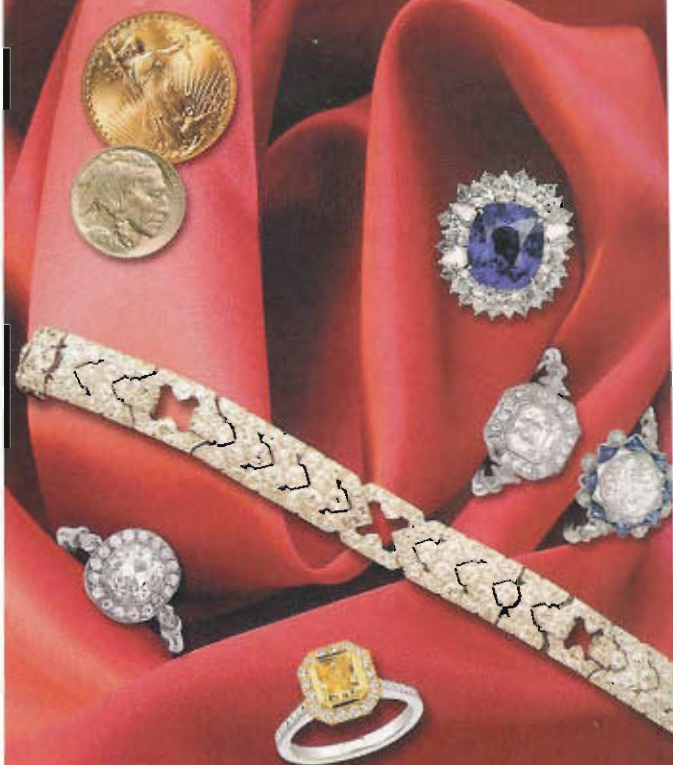
**Results:** The needle goes a bit deeper than in a Botox treatment, so a topical anesthetic was necessary. The pinch, though, is worth it for the instantaneous results. Save for the redness of the needle, my face was as smooth as a Hawaiian beach.

So smitten was he with my youthful face and tinier waist, my husband forgot all about my unchanged bra size.

Even Dr. E was wowed. "I can see how you must have looked in your twenties," she said.

Sold!

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