

# Pump Up the Volume



by Mary Jo Blackwood, R.N., MPH

Over the last decade, fillers have increased in popularity. People now realize that part of the change in our appearance that comes with aging is a loss of tissue volume. "Like the skin of a balloon that becomes more wrinkled as it loses air, our skin does the same thing, made worse by things like smoking and long-term sun exposure," explains Dr. John Holds of Ophthalmic Plastic and Cosmetic Surgery.

He says that to return to a more youthful look, we have to plump up the volume we've lost. There are different types of fillers for different applications that can do the job. Hyaluronic acid fillers, made from a substance found naturally in the body, offer several options. "Restylane is very good, particularly around the lips and to fill in a tear trough deformity under the eyes, sometimes in lieu of lower eyelid surgery," Holds says. "There are other variants on these, but in general, they last from four to 10 months depending on the site."

A more long-term filler, Radiesse, is made from calcium hydroxyapatite paste, the same mineral in bones, and goes in like white caulk. The body encapsulates it. This filler must be injected fairly deep to lift up hollow areas. If injected too superficially, the white can show through. It is often used to fill in hollow areas under the cheeks.

Sculptra, another popular filler, is made from poly-L-lactate, the same material as dissolvable sutures. It's injected in tiny spheres, which the body lays collagen around. It's a slow (and expensive) process that requires multiple treatments but is supposed to last several years.

"Because we're replacing fat loss, even if the filler is permanent, age-related fat loss continues, so more filler would be needed over time," Holds notes. He often uses fillers in combination with Botox for dynamic wrinkles, which are caused by repeated muscle contraction.

Dr. L. Mike Nayak of Nayak Plastic Surgery explains fillers from a different perspective. "There are three main classes," he says. "The first includes fillers that take up space themselves, like collagen, Restylane, or other hyaluronic preparations and Radiesse. The second type, inductive fillers like Sculptra, don't take up space, but instead generate a filler response, like putting grains of sand into an oyster so it can form pearls around them. Over a month, it develops a collagen filling."

Nayak says the third category is autologous (our own) fat. Similar to inductive fillers, these cause wrinkles to smooth out. Fat from the belly, hip or thigh is used to soften gaunt areas of the face, and it can last a long time. He says people like it because it's their own natural tissue and is more economical than commercial fillers. "Some companies promote what they call 'filler cocktails,' combinations of fillers," he explains. "In some areas of the face, a combination of fillers can be useful. Botox can also be used in conjunction with fillers to make them last longer by decreasing muscle activity."

Dr. Richard Moore of The Lifestyle Center has still a different perspective. He uses a combination of fillers and skin-tightening treatments. Refirme, a new device recently approved by the FDA, tightens and stimulates collagen under the skin, much like Thermage, but using infrared and bipolar radiofrequency energy. Then he uses fillers to complement what's been achieved with Refirme. "If I were to use the skin-tightening procedure by itself, the patient



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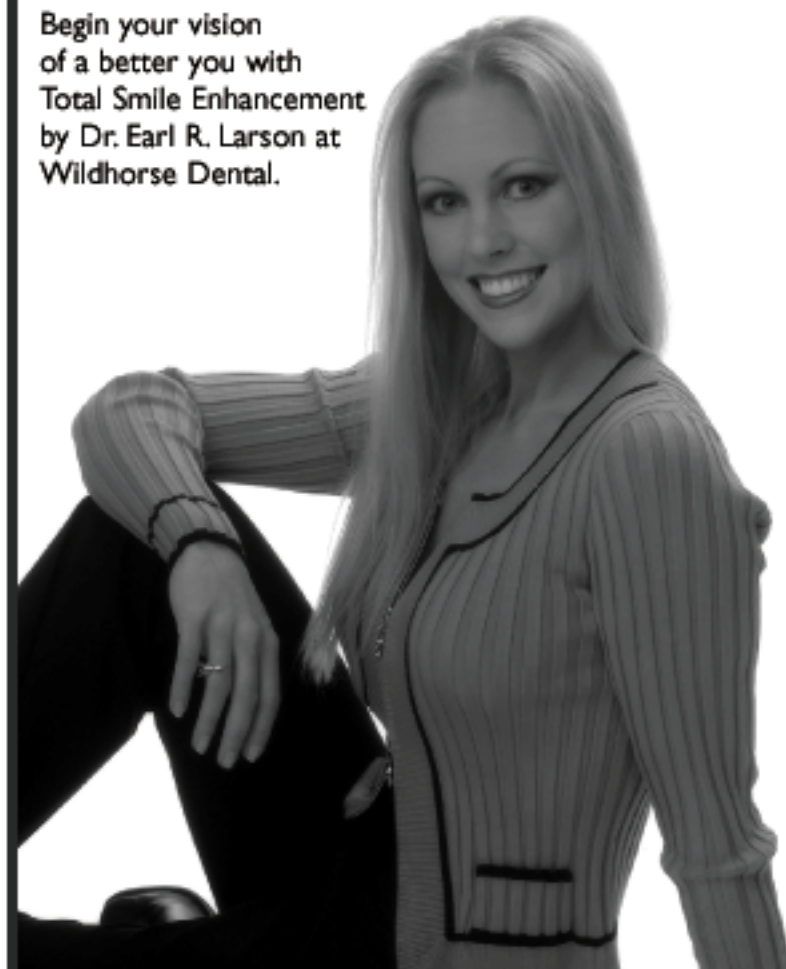
could end up looking worse. Tightening the skin in the hollows and along the jawline without fillers to replace volume could make the patient look more gaunt. I may also do some light therapy to improve clarity and skin texture, while removing hyperpigmented spots and fine veins. I don't think many people realize the huge improvement you can achieve in your appearance non-surgically by replacing volume and treating surface skin damage."

Moore uses Restylane for fine lines and brow furrows, and to increase lip volume. Sculptra, he says, is great for filling out hollow areas, like the nasolabial folds, cheeks and around crows feet. The results are delayed but will last 18 to 24 months. "We are always looking at the cost benefit of different treatments for the patient," he notes. "Sculptra's price is going up, making Radiesse more affordable. I will combine fillers if it meets the patient's needs."

Moore says another filler, Artefill, doesn't have FDA approval yet but should last as long as five years and have the same application as Radiesse and Sculptra. The goal with all fillers, he notes, should be to re-establish facial contours from the patient's youth. LN

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