

The Truth About Liquid Facelifts

By Dr. Farzaneh

Just as soymilk is not really milk, a liquid facelift is not really a facelift. But just as soymilk has its place in a consumer's choice of beverages, a liquid facelift has its place in a cosmetic surgeon's armamentarium.

A liquid facelift is not the only solution for every patient, however, and cannot substitute for a true facelift. So why is it called a facelift? Well, "liquid facelift" is a cute name that quickly went 'viral' with the media and worked well with marketing. Despite its catchy name, popularity with patients, and the relative ease with which it can be performed, a liquid facelift has both advantages and limitations that should be discussed clearly with the patient.

To begin with, we all age differently. Some may start with hollow cheeks and deep laugh lines; others with drooping brows, jowls or a loose neck. We used to blame it all on gravity, but now we know better. Researchers at UT Southwestern Medical Center discovered that the face is made of multiple compartments (balloons) that deflate and droop at different rates. As we get older we lose bone, fat and collagen. This loss contributes to deflation of the facial

framework and thinning of the skin, leading to hollowness, deep folds and fine wrinkles. A liquid facelift - more accurately described as re-volumization with facial fillers - addresses the loss of volume in the compartments of the face.

Cheeks are one of those compartments, and they play a major part in defining the facial framework. Loss of volume in the cheek area contributes significantly to the prominence of laugh lines, hollowness beneath the eyes, and exaggeration of lower eyelid bags. To some extent, these areas can be addressed separately with a liquid facelift. Facial fillers (especially Radiesse) are injected in the deep hollow areas to rebuild the depressions, and lift and raise the folds. Perlane, Restylane and Juvederm are used to soften the transition zones. In addition, Botox or Dysport can be used to lessen wrinkles such as crow's feet around the eyes, or forehead wrinkles that are caused by repetitive muscle movements.

Unfortunately, there is a lot more to facial aging than that which can be fixed with re-volumization. Aging is further confounded by

loosening of the musculature, which causes a drooping effect on the face, turning it from an oval to a more square shape. This cannot be corrected just by injecting fillers. Fillers cannot tighten a loose neck or droopy jowls. Most surgeons will agree that correcting significant aging in the neck, cheeks and jowls requires a true facelift.

While there is no doubt that in younger patients or patients with minor volume loss a liquid facelift may be sufficient, it is important to understand that fillers can't substitute for a facelift. If it was that simple, surgeons would no longer be performing facelifts.

Remember, soymilk is not real milk, any more than a liquid facelift is a facelift. A full evaluation by a surgeon who can offer the patient all options (including the true definitive facelift) is imperative.

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