

Cosmetic work less invasive

By **JOHN NELANDER**
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Seventy might be the new 50 if you exercise and maintain a nutritious diet — but aging affects the outside as well as the inside. That's why people who want a more youthful look to go along with their healthier body are heading to plastic surgeons.

Less-invasive surgical lifts and the use of longer-lasting fillers to firm up tissue are the latest cosmetic surgery trends. The use of minimally invasive fat injections increased nationally by 13 percent from 2015 to 2016, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.

"There's been a huge boom in noninvasive cosmetic procedures," said Dr. Debra Johnson, president of the Chicago-based organization. "Some new products and devices are out, like different laser treatments that work under the skin, so there's very little down time.

"We have a population that's working longer; people aren't retiring at 65 anymore. They're still in the workforce and they want to continue to look energetic and youthful and competitive."

People as young as the late 30s are opting for some fine-tuning, said Dr. Richard Schwartz of the Palm Beach Plastic Surgery Center in West Palm Beach, to maintain a "healthy" appearance. "They're choosing to have much less extensive surgery, and that gives them a subtler look. Other people don't have any idea that they've had anything done; they just

look good," he said.

"But my typical patient from Palm Beach is in their 50s, 60s or 70s," he added. "They've got much too much loose skin for these nonsurgical devices."

But face-lifts and neck-lifts — the "gold standard" of plastic surgery — have become less invasive, however. There are now "short-scar" lifts involve minimal cutting.

"Women can wear their hair up without any telltale signs," Schwartz said. "So they're more popular, but they're not for everyone. An older person who has a tremendous amount of loose skin is going to need more effective skin tightening on the neck and they're going to need work in the back for a complete face-lift."

Plastic surgeons divide facial aging into several categories, including loosening and sagging of the skin and loss of volume. The face gets thinner and depressions develop where there was once smooth skin.

The problem can be addressed by injecting fat from the patient's own body to fill out the depressions and make the face appear fuller. About 60 to 70 percent of the fat cells survive the implantation, so the benefits can be long-term. The original "fillers" used in the early days —

usually collagen — lasted just two or three months.

Plastic surgeons also removed excess skin, which gave the face a tighter look.

"Then we realized not only do we need to remove the excess skin, we need to tighten up the underlying facial attachments," Johnson said. "It's kind of like making a bed — you have to straighten the sheets and the comforter."

Sun damage can leave skin splotchy and rough, especially in South Florida. The new approach is to use lasers to remove and smooth out the imperfections with a sort of "controlled burn" done by a type of laser.

Schwartz gives a patient with splotchy brown pigmentation a light treatment that will look like a bad sunburn for a few days before it disappears.

"But if someone has a lot of rough lines on their skin and it looks like old leather, they may need a treatment with a different type of laser where it's a much bigger production," he says. "There's no cutting, but there is a wound on the skin that has to heal."

The idea with plastic surgery these days is not to make people look radically younger but to make them look healthier, Schwartz and Johnson agree. That's where laser therapy can be

effective.

There's been another gradual cultural change through the years with plastic surgery. Having cosmetic work done used to be something to keep secret. Friends and family would notice, but the details were not generally discussed.

"There's been a change in society," Schwartz said. "Doing something to help maintain your appearance is looked upon more favorably and is more commonly done.

"In the early years of my practice, I might go to a restaurant or dinner party, and if I ran into patients of mine it was understood that they might smile or give me a slight wave, but I wasn't going to come over if they were with a bunch of people.

"I once went to a fundraiser in Palm Beach and the hostess said, 'You've got to meet three friends of mine.' She pulled me over and they were all former patients. None of them wanted their friends to know that they'd done something. We just chatted.

"Now it's very different. When my wife and I go out — whether it's to a restaurant or the Kravis Center someone might come up and say 'Dr. Schwartz, it's so nice to see you! I'm still happy with what you did.' If they're with friends they may say, 'He's my plastic surgeon.'

"There's much more emphasis placed on creating a natural look for people, so they just look better."

Moreover, even older seniors are opting for cosmetic improvements.

"I once did a face-lift on



Johnson

Says older people in the workforce seek procedures.



Schwartz

Sees patients in 30s who want a healthy look.

Number of cosmetic surgeries hits 1.8 million nationwide

About 1.8 million cosmetic surgical procedures were performed nationwide in 2016, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, along with 15.5 million "minimally invasive" procedures.

Of surgical procedures, face-lifts jumped 4 percent from 2015 and eyelid surgery was up 2 percent.

"We have some fat around the eyes which tends to kind of pooch forward as we get older," said Dr. Debra Johnson, society president. "People say, 'I'm tired of looking tired. I want to look fresher and more rested.'"

Eyelid surgery tightens loose skin and can treat "bags under the eyes." Fine wrinkles on the lower eyelid can be smoothed out.

Another new kind of noninvasive treatment is called "fat freezing," although it might not literally freeze off unwanted fat. Essentially, a radio frequency device placed on the outside of the skin transmits energy through the skin and into the underlying fat layers.

"It creates a layer of injury that kills some of the fat," Johnson said. "You can take a fat layer that's 2 inches thick and instead of sucking it out with liposuction, you kind of reduce it down."

Fat freezing procedures also increased 5 percent from 2015 to 2016.

GENDER AND PLASTIC SURGERY — Men are becoming more open to cosmetic surgery, but women still make up about 95 percent of patients, according to Johnson.

"We'll see men for fillers, skin rejuvenation and work on their eyelids," she said. "We see men occasionally for face-lifts, but it's trickier to camouflage scars with their short hair."

West Palm Beach plastic surgeon Dr. Richard Schwartz says he does "a fair amount of neck-lifts on men. I see more men who are just interested in getting rid of the turkey wattle, especially if they're still working and they have to wear a shirt and tie."

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a 91-year-old woman from Palm Beach who was referred to me by her internist, who is also my internist. He said, 'This woman at 91 is one of the healthiest people in my practice. She swims laps every day, she does not take any medication except vitamins, she likes to go dancing, and if

she wants to look a little better, I think it's fine.'

"We did the face-lift and there was a very nice result. And when she came back for her last visit, she told me how happy she was. She said 'My companions at these social events think I look great. But all my old friends hate my guts.'"