

BEAUTY

Filling TIME

In the right hands, injectable facial fillers can plump out lines and restore firmness, but it pays to do your research before giving them a shot. We look at the options available and products that aim to achieve similar results

Facial fillers have had some seriously bad press recently – and with good reason. The fact that they are not regulated in the UK means that anyone can take up a syringe and start injecting. And with more than 60 different fillers available over here, compared to only around ten in the US, how do you even start choosing which filler is right for you – let alone choosing a practitioner who can administer it safely?

"A good cosmetic doctor is also an artist," says Dr Maurice Dray, a pioneer in the field of aesthetic medicine and a specialist in gerontology, the science of how the body ages. His 10-minute liquid facelift, which uses fillers to lift and sculpt the face, was developed in Paris but is now so in demand on this side of the Channel that he spends two days a week in London, injecting the faces of the rich and famous.

Traditionally, it was thought that lines and wrinkles were simply the result of skin ageing, but studies have shown that they happen as a result of lost volume within the skin. And that is what fillers aim to correct. "I use a combination of two injectable fillers – a calcium hydroxylapatite deep into the dermis, the deepest layer of the skin, to add volume and to encourage new collagen, supporting and lifting sagging skin, jowls and jawline, plus

hyaluronic acid into the fine lines around the lips and into the nasolabial lines," explains Dr Dray of his technique.

The procedure is done with numbing cream and can leave small bruises, but the effects are instant and should get better over time. "I like to think that my work can delay facelift surgery for a woman, particularly if she has started to notice her jawline soften and her cheeks start to sag," he says. However, it might take more than one treatment to attain the optimum results. "I like to see a patient two or three times, as different faces react in different ways and some skin requires more filler than others," Dr Dray explains. "I can also then use Botox on frown lines and my mesolift micro injections of vitamins and minerals to bring radiance to the skin. The finished effect should take years off a face."

Revolutionary as all this sounds, dermal fillers are nothing new. Fat transfer – taking fat from one part of the body and injecting it into another – was developed more than a century ago. The trouble is, even with improvements in the techniques, fat does not transfer well and much of it is simply absorbed by the body, so cosmetic scientists are constantly looking for new ways to fill our faces.

Still used today, collagen injections were launched in 1976,

but because the collagen used was derived from cattle skin, the BSE scare created a demand for a new, non-animal alternative. The answer was hyaluronic acid fillers such as Restylane, Perlane and Juvéderm, which utilise a substance found naturally in skin. Hyaluronic acid attracts water to keep cells plump but, unfortunately, it declines over time. It is slowly absorbed by your body so the results are only temporary (on the plus side, if you don't like your new fuller look you can have an enzyme injected that will dissolve the filler even faster).

If you do decide to try fillers, the best advice is to steer clear of the newest and latest crazes. At present, the regulations remain lax, enabling a product to be promoted after minimal testing. It's best, then, to stick to long-term accepted practices and established, temporary fillers.

When it comes to choosing a practitioner, try asking your friends and family if they would be prepared to recommend anyone from experience. *Dermal fillers should only be administered by an experienced doctor or nurse. The government has helped set up treatmentsyoucantrust.co.uk, offering a list of approved and qualified practitioners who can administer facial fillers*

• For details of Dr Maurice Dray's 10-Minute Facelift visit drdray.co.uk