

Don't touch! Curling your eyelashes is a better disguise for droopy lids.



The no-knife eye lift

Surgery isn't the only way to look younger. Here, safer, less scary alternatives, from high-tech to low. **by Holly Crawford**

for busy moms, the holidays deliver a special double whammy: 'Tis the season to go out and look your best, but you're so tired and tense that you may feel closer to your worst. The secret to looking sensational rather than spread-too-thin is to focus on your eyes. Sure, a surgical lift would definitely take off years. But that's not for everyone, and it doesn't need to be. Now you can give your eyes a noticeable boost without enduring all that angst—and paying

all that money. While none of the "no-knife" options can produce the full effects of surgery, procedures like injections (Botox and its cousins) and laser resurfacing are becoming almost commonplace. (The number of Botox injections given annually jumped 388 percent from 2000 to 2005, reports the American Society of Plastic Surgeons.) If needles make you squeamish, there are easier ways to turn back the clock. Some women are content to let themselves age gracefully, while others (last year, ▶

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8.4 million people) have chosen one of the new alternatives to the knife. Read on to learn about your options—then decide what you feel comfortable with.

HOW YOUR EYES AGE...AND HOW TO DEAL

Your face is surprisingly tough—except for the thinner skin around your eyes, which is very fragile. So that's where the effects of sun, time, and stress show up first. Here, the most common flaws and how to counteract them:

PROBLEM: Wrinkles and furrows

SOLUTION: From tiny crow's-feet to deep lines, all can be virtually erased by muscle-relaxing injections (like Botox) and resurfacing (think lasers and chemical peels).

PROBLEM: Drooping or hooded eyelids

SOLUTION: The skin on your lids thins and sags over time, eventually resulting in heavy or droopy lids that

can make you look tired and older. The doctor's strategy: to inject Botox into your squinting muscles—the ones in your crow's-feet area. Relaxing these muscles will lift heavy eyelids and help open up your eyes so they look more youthful and awake.

PROBLEM: Hollows under the eye; these represent fat loss (in a place you really don't want to lose it)

SOLUTION: filler injections (like Restylane), which can plump up the recesses and brighten the area.

PROBLEM: Dark undereye circles, often caused by thin skin, genes, a cluster of veins, or a buildup of blood

SOLUTION: filler injections, which thicken the skin so the bluish color is less obvious and you look less tired.

PROBLEM: Puffy undereyes due to fat pockets

SOLUTION: The fat can be repositioned or removed—but those procedures are still the job of a surgeon.

NEW! Combination therapy gets big results

The latest thinking is that the best nonsurgical results come from combining treatments. By mixing noninvasive procedures in a single "cocktail," a doctor can address multiple signs of aging in just one session.

WHAT'S ON THE MENU A patient might get Botox to smooth brow furrows and lift drooping lids, plus Restylane to fill in undereye hollows. Cosmetic dermatologist David Colbert, M.D., founder of the New York Dermatology Group, recommends this quartet: Botox, chemical peel, laser toning, and Restylane filling. "That is a winning combination that completely rejuvenates the eye area," he explains. These treatments require no general anesthesia and take minutes to do—with little to no downtime needed afterward. "You'll take off ten years in one visit and, in most cases, still be able to go out to dinner with your husband the same night," says Jessica Wu, M.D., a clinical instructor of dermatology at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center. (For more details on each of these procedures, turn the page.)

LOOK LIKE YOU, ONLY BETTER Part of the beauty of a nonsurgical "lift" is that people will register that you look relaxed and rested, but they may not realize medical science is responsible. Another plus: If you're not happy with the results, you're not committed. In about six months, your face will return to its former self. "You 'own' an eye lift for many years," Dr. Wu explains. "This is more like leasing."

WORK WITH A DOCTOR Whether you're up for a cocktail or just a consultation, remember:

- A dermatologist or a plastic surgeon—not an aesthetician—should administer any and all treatments. And make sure your doctor has experience doing the specific treatment you're seeking, advises New York City plastic surgeon Lawrence S. Reed, M.D.
- Ask to see before-and-after patient photos.
- In this field, cheaper is not necessarily better, so don't bargain-hunt with your face.
- For doctors in your area (and answers to many of your questions) consult Web sites like plasticsurgery.org, aad.org, and asds-net.org. ▶