

## What the heck is dermal filler?

We live in a day and age where beauty and youth are everywhere. Television, billboards, newspapers, magazines; it seems that every time we turn around we see a perfect smile with a perfect body trying to sell us something. The positive side to all of this is that advances are made every day that can make us look and feel younger. We can replace lost teeth, creaky knee joints, and a variety of other parts that we wear out as we age. That's not including all of the other enhancements available today. Heck, I might someday grow my own hair back over that bald spot that is ever widening.

In past articles, I've outlined some of the different ways that we can improve your youthful vigor by fixing your teeth and gums. Today, I'd like to discuss a totally different way that dentists and other health care professionals can make you look, and subsequently feel, younger. I've always agreed with the old saying, "If you look good, you feel good. If you feel good, you play good."

My goal in life is to play good, every day.

What I'm talking about are dermal fillers, a way to remove those lines and wrinkles that look back at you from the mirror each morning. First off, let's be clear, this is different than *Botox*. *Botox* is a toxin, made from bacteria, that temporarily paralyzes facial muscles for about three months. Dermal fillers (there are several brands, *Restylane* and *Perlane* being two of the more common) are gel like substances that can be injected into depressions or wrinkles to fill the volume lost to aging. As we grow older, our skin loses its volume and elasticity due to loss of hydration in our cells. Dermal fillers help to temporarily (usually for about 6 months or more) replace this lost volume. They are made of a natural substance found in our bodies called hyaluronic acid. HA, as we call it, is found all around our bodies all the time.

So why is a dentist getting rid of facial lines and wrinkles? Why not? We spend each day anesthetizing facial nerves and treating all sorts of facial pain. We dedicate our lives learning about the muscles and nerves of the face, head, and neck. The neck up is our specialty. Most importantly, what better way to frame a perfect smile than to have a beautiful, plump set of lips?

I'll be honest and admit that a little body work is not for everyone. No amount of dermal filler is going to get my mug on television. There are definitely examples of famous people who have gone too far and now look like plastic dolls. All that said, there is nothing wrong with regaining a more youthful look and adding a little spring to your step. If it's done well, the only things your friends will notice will be a little something different and better. We'll keep your secret.

Until next time, keep smiling.

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