

Injectable Fillers: Hyaluronans

Filler injections no longer use collagen, but a safer, longer-lasting and naturally occurring material such as hyaluronans. These are naturally found in all living tissues, including humans, and don't require prior testing for allergy.

The difference between fillers and botulinum toxin injections is, fillers correct established facial lines while botulinum toxin relaxes the facial muscles that produce expression lines. In general, botulinum toxin injections are best started before established lines (wrinkles, creases or furrows). On the other hand, fillers are only useful after the onset of established lines, except for shaping procedures, such as lip shaping, that can be carried out at any stage of adult life. Fillers are often used in conjunction with botulinum toxin, as their actions are synergistic. Most patients start with muscle relaxing botulinum injections (those 20 years and over) to reduce excessive expression lines that can lead to permanent wrinkles. For people aged 40 years and over, permanent lines and volume loss may have occurred, and these can be improved with fillers.

What can Hyaluronan fillers do for me?

Lip shaping

- Lip definition
- Lip plumping
- Elevate down-turning of mouth corners

Other shaping procedures

- Cheek bones
- Jaw line
- Contour correction of defects (acne, trauma, surgical)

Lines and furrows

- Nasolabial furrows (side of nose to corner of mouth)
- Marionette lines (corner of mouth to jaw)
- Vertical frown lines between the eyebrows
- Horizontal worry lines on the forehead
- Crows feet

What does the procedure involve?

The procedure involves multiple fine injections to the treatment area. Local or topical anaesthetic may be required depending on the region.

Many patients find the application of ice alone sufficiently numbing to reduce the injection discomfort to a manageable level.

At the completion of the treatment, the injector may need to massage the treated area to help mould the filler into place.

What happens after treatment & how long will the results last?

Immediately after treatment, puncture marks may be slightly visible but usually settles within half an hour. Additional application of ice may be helpful to decrease bruising but not essential. It is not necessary to continue to massage the area unless instructed by your injector.

The treated area may look slightly puffier than the effect of the filler alone, due to temporary tissue swelling. At times this may be asymmetrical but will settle over the next 24-48 hours. Bruising may develop either at the time of the injection or over the next few days but is usually not marked, and will settle within 4-5 days. It will take approximately 2 weeks for the result to be effectively assessed and you will be asked to return for review and an appointment will be made during the initial visit.

Patients on anti-inflammatories or aspirin may be at increased risk of bruising.

The filler duration depends on the 'thickness' of the filler and the treatment areas. A 'thinner' filler usually lasts 4-6 months while a 'thicker' filler will last 6-12 months. Areas of high mobility such as around the eyes and mouth may also disperse the filler faster, leading to a shorter life. There is also personal variation in the longevity of the filler in different individuals.

What are the unwanted side effects of Hyaluronan fillers?

When the injection is too superficial, beading (small visible lumps) and discolouration may occur, which is dependent on technique. This usually settles with time but can be released by needling. Uneven filling can be corrected with antidote injections of hyaluronidase that rapidly dissolves the excess hyaluronan filler.

1 in every 10,000 treatments may induce a hypersensitivity reaction that may result in persistent swelling, inflammation, cyst or granuloma (lump) formation. This is usually temporary and can be treated with corticosteroids.

Theoretically, accidental injection into skin arteries can lead to skin ulcers and even blindness. These complications are associated with the older bovine collagen injections rather than hyaluronans. The vast majority of injectors will never experience this complication over a lifetime of treating patients.

We do not treat:

- Pregnant or breast-feeding women
- Children under the age of 18 without parental consent
- Any area where current significant skin disease or infections such as cold sores are present
- Individuals with a history of collagen/ scarring/ connective tissue disorders
- Anyone with emotional, mental or medical condition that may impair judgment
- Anyone with a history of significant adverse reactions to filler injections