

BY SHARI HELD

New and Improved

THE LATEST TECHNOLOGIES AND TECHNIQUES ARE MAKING COSMETIC PROCEDURES MORE EFFICIENT AND LESS INVASIVE WHILE SACRIFICING NOTHING IN THE WAY OF RESULTS

It seems that every year there's something new and promising in the world of cosmetic procedures, whether it's an innovative way of reducing fat, adding curves, eliminating wrinkles, or rescuing sagging jowls (and other body parts) from the effects of gravity. It can be difficult to tell what's fact and what's fiction—a good thing when your appearance and self-esteem are at stake.

"I caution patients to gather as much information as they can but to take it with a grain of salt," says Taha Z. Shipchandler, M.D., a facial plastic surgeon with IU Health Physicians. "I tell them not to be taken in by the latest fad or the latest technique."

To help you decide whether these new technologies and techniques are right for you, here's a look at some of them from specialists in the field.

NEWEST DEVICES

► HydraSolve is the latest advancement in liposuction. It uses warm, pressurized saline solution to liquefy and release targeted fat, leaving blood vessels, nerves, and connective tissue undamaged. There's less trauma to the body and a potentially quicker healing time. It's also a more efficient process, enabling fat to be removed faster than with current methods. Meridian Plastic Surgeons is one of 15 sites nationwide selected to test-drive the device.

"This is probably one of the biggest improvements in liposuction that's come along in quite some time," says Bruce Van Natta, M.D., of Meridian Plastic Surgeons. "We're so excited to be able to offer something to our patients that makes the process of liposuction a little less uncomfortable, a little less traumatic, and yet still yield very good results."

CoolSculpting and truSculpt kill fat cells—the former by chilling and the latter by heat. Both are non-invasive and don't require downtime. You'll see results in several weeks.

"I don't think these treatments are going to replace liposuction, but they've provided attractive options for people who've undergone liposuction and want to get some additional improvement, or for people who aren't quite candidates for doing full liposuction," says Burke Chegar, M.D., of Chegar Facial Plastic Surgery.

Radio-frequency laser devices for body contouring and skin tightening also continue to improve.

"They still aren't the same as having a face lift or a brow lift, but two of them—Exilis and Viora Reaction—are worth mentioning," says Mark Hamilton, M.D., of Hamilton Facial Plastic Surgery. "The advantage with these two is they are less painful, and the focused energy makes them more effective at what they do."

The skin may appear pink afterward, but the treatments—from four to eight are advised, depending on the device and area treated—have a good safety record. Improvements will continue for up to six

months after treatment.

IMPROVED TECHNIQUES

► Sometimes it's all about the technique instead of the technology. With a traditional tummy tuck, drains are inserted between the skin and the muscles to eliminate post-operative fluid for up to three weeks. They're uncomfortable and annoying. A new technique closes the tummy in a manner that eliminates the need for drains. Complication rates, results, and cost are all comparable, but patients are more comfortable and enjoy a quicker recovery time.

"Men and women who are below 200 pounds are usually good candidates for the drainless technique, but it depends on how thick their tissue layer is," says John Aker, M.D., of My Plastic Surgery Group.

One new technique in breast augmentation surgery is endoscopic augmentation, or "endo aug."

"A lot of women don't know about the endo aug, but when they come in for a consultation and learn about it, about 95 percent of them choose it," Aker says.

With an endo aug, breast implants (saline or gel) are inserted through an incision in the armpit guided by an endoscope. Complication rates are similar and potentially lower than with traditional surgery, and cost and downtime (a couple of days) are comparable to traditional surgery. The big plus is that there is no scar on the breast and nipple sensation is not affected.



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FASHIONING WITH FAT

▶ Another breakthrough in breast augmentation surgery involves using a patient's own fat as an alternative to implants. Via liposuction, fat is removed from one area, centrifuged, and injected into the breasts in "micrografts" of one-half or one centimeter at a time.

"You have to do that over and over again to build up the volume in the layers of tissue," Van Natta says. "Technique is very important here."

This method can increase the breast from one to two cup sizes. While still an invasive procedure, the advantages are that there are no appreciable incisions on the breast, no danger of implant rejection, and the breast looks and feels totally natural. That procedure can be used in conjunction with Brava, which stretches breast tissue prior to surgery to allow more fat insertion at one time. This is best used for very small cup sizes.

One downside is that only so much fat can be placed at any one time, and approximately one-third is lost over time. Increasing bust size substantially requires several procedures.

"This is cutting-edge," Van Natta says. "It's really very exciting."

Fat transfer can also be used to successfully increase facial volume, which decreases with age. It's a process Shipchandler recommends to many of his patients.

"Transferring fat from one part of the body to the face in a conservative, natural manner produces such a youthful and dramatic effect," he says. "It's a very short and quite comfortable procedure to do, and the healing time is also very short."

Another technique Shipchandler has refined is surgery that eliminates that "baggy" appearance around the eyelids without producing a hollow area around the eyes years later.

"That almost looked worse," Shipchandler says. "The latest technique is to reposition and redistribute the fat rather than remove it. That way we maintain the volume so patients don't appear hollow later, while still smoothing out the bags and giving them a youthful appearance." ◊

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