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THE NEW NECK LIFTS

Chin up—there's no need to feel bad about your neck. The latest high-tech procedures can lift lax skin, firm your jawline, erase wrinkles, and banish sun spots. Emily Listfield investigates the best options.

NEW BREAKTHROUGH PROCEDURES that can treat everything from crepey skin to a double chin have women booking appointments at cosmetic doctors' offices in record numbers. Carolyn Chang, M.D., one of San Francisco's top plastic surgeons, thinks there's an additional reason for the surge in neck treatments: "When you look in the mirror, you hold your head upright and get the best angle," she says. "But when you look down at your phone to FaceTime, you look like a bullfrog even if you're young and have zero body fat." Adding insult to injury, continually looking down at a screen strains your neck muscles, causing them to droop even more.

New York dermatologist Paul Jarrod Frank, M.D., who counts Madonna as a client, believes that a combination of procedures will get the best results. To reduce under-the-chin pooches, he reaches for the new SculpSure submental laser. The device heats and damages fat cells, which the body naturally eliminates over the next month. "I can remove several teaspoons of fat in two 25-minute treatments spaced a month apart," Frank explains. The pain-free procedure (\$2,500 for two treatments) offers permanent results with no downtime, but it won't tighten skin. For that, Frank uses the new Exilis Ultra, which combines radio frequency with ultrasound to heat skin beneath the surface, prompting collagen production to improve texture and decrease laxity. "You'll see results in one to two weeks, with no downtime, and your skin will continue to tighten over the following three months," he says. Two to five treatments may be needed for optimal results, which last for about two years (\$400–\$1,000 per treatment).

For a more aggressive approach, there is the Infini, which combines microneedling with radio frequency to diminish crepiness. The needling causes a healing process that improves skin's texture, while the insulated tips deliver radio frequency for deeper collagen production to tighten skin and smooth lines. The depth of the needles can be adjusted for the patient (a topical anesthetic is applied first); the deeper you go, the more dramatic the outcome, but expect up to a week of redness. Initial improvements are visible in the first couple of weeks; it can take up to six months to see the full tightening effect. (Two or three treatments, \$1,500 each, may be needed; results last a few years.)

Robert Anolik, M.D., a New York dermatologist and Kelly Ripa's

go-to guy, prefers to treat fat under the chin with Kybella, an injectable with naturally occurring molecules that destroy fat cells. "It gets targeted results, including a more defined jawline," he says. The results are permanent, but three or four treatments spaced two to three months apart are needed and swelling can last several days (\$1,000 to \$3,600 per session). Also a fan of Infini, Anolik often combines it with a few shots of Botox in the platysma muscle to soften neck bands and decrease pulling, which has the added benefit of preventing future skin laxity. He uses fillers such as Juvéderm to contour the jawline and reduce jowls, and a variety of lasers, from the lighter Clear + Brilliant to the stronger Fraxel, to help with skin texture, pigmentation, and sun damage. Whatever treatment you have, be sure to use SPF every day. Anolik also recommends using Retin-A or a retinol product every other night to build collagen, as well as a moisturizer with peptides to help remodel skin. Try RoC Multi Correxion 5-in-1 Chest, Neck & Face Cream with SPF 30 (\$27.99) and StriVectin TL Advanced Tightening Neck Cream (\$95).

At a certain point (read age), even the newest technologies have their limits. "People are hitting a wall with noninvasive treatments," Chang says. "A neck-lift is a onetime procedure that lasts from 15 to 20 years."

Chang's signature technique combines a lower face- and neck-lift for more natural, contoured results. "I go in from behind the ears instead of making a big incision under the chin to treat the underlying muscle and connective tissue first, pulling back the platysma muscle. Then the skin is gently re-draped over the newly tightened tissues and I trim away any excess." The surgery is done under general anesthesia; at-home recovery takes from 10 days to two weeks. Cost: \$20,000–\$25,000.

Carrie, 52, an interior designer, had the procedure done seven months ago. "I had crepey skin and big horizontal lines on my neck," she recalls. "My neck was like a sagging stocking. Now it's all tucked up, my jawline is so much better, and my skin glows." But, she adds, "Two days later, my head was like a basketball. I had a lot of bruising and crust around my ears." Nevertheless, she made it to an outdoor cocktail party two weeks after the surgery. "I wore my hair down to cover the crustiness and prayed there would be no wind." ■

Continually looking down at a screen strains your neck muscles, causing them to droop even more, warns plastic surgeon Carolyn Chang.