

What You Should Know About Wrinkle Fillers

Injectable wrinkle fillers can give you a more youthful look for a fraction of what a traditional face lift costs. Most will fill lines and wrinkles in less than 30 minutes with results that can last from four months to more than a year.

Injectable wrinkle fillers, unlike Botox injections that relax the muscle under a wrinkle, fill the line or crease with one of several different substances. As a result, the line or crease seems to have nearly disappeared.



Wrinkle fillers can also be used as "volumizers," plumping and lifting cheeks, filling out thin lips, and plumping sagging hands.

The treatment is fast and easy. But all wrinkle fillers have a downside, including the risk of allergic reaction and the formation of tiny bumps under the skin. In some cases, those bumps may be permanent. A bluish skin discoloration known as the Tyndall effect is also possible. The color change can last for several months, but there are treatments available. In very rare cases, skin cells may die if the wrinkle fillers are not used properly. Typically, the wrinkle fillers with longer-lasting effects are the ones more likely to cause side effects.

Not every wrinkle is right for every type of wrinkle filler. The least risks and best results come from using the right wrinkle filler correctly. That's one reason why you should only have wrinkle fillers injected by a board-certified dermatologist or plastic surgeon.

To help you discuss your options with your doctor, here is a breakdown of the wrinkle fillers currently available. It includes their basic ingredients, how they work, their risks and benefits, and the best areas for treatment. Your doctor can help you choose the right one for you.

Hyaluronic Acid Wrinkle Fillers

The most popular category of wrinkle fillers is hyaluronic acid. Each type of hyaluronic acid wrinkle filler works in a slightly different way with varying results.

Side effects are rare, but they can include redness, swelling, and bruising at the injection site. The filler may also be seen beneath the skin as tiny bumps. This is a problem that often improves over time.

How long the results last varies from several months to over a year. Some research shows that repeated injections may help stimulate the body's own natural production of collagen. That will help reduce the number of lines and wrinkles. There is also some evidence that less filler is needed over time to achieve the same look.

Hyaluronic wrinkle fillers include:

Wrinkle Filler: Juvederm Ultra/Juvederm Ultra Plus

Ingredient: Gel made of hyaluronic acid

Effects: Up to one year

FDA Approved for: Moderate to severe facial wrinkles and folds

FYI: Not recommended if you have severe allergies, particularly if you're allergic to bacterial proteins

Wrinkle Filler: Restylane/Perlane

Ingredient: Hyaluronic acid particles suspended in a gel

Effects: Six months or longer

FDA Approved for: Moderate to severe wrinkles and folds.

FYI: Not recommended if you have severe allergies.

Synthetic Wrinkle Fillers

This smaller category of wrinkle fillers includes lab-made substances that are not related to anything found naturally in the skin.

All the fillers in this group have similar side effects. Redness, swelling, or bruising at the site of the injection is one of the most common. Other possible side effects include nodules or bumps under the skin that can be seen and felt and that, in rare instances, may require surgical removal.

The benefits of this category include a longer-lasting effect. And at least one filler offers permanent filling of lines and creases. Products with longer-lasting effects are more likely to cause side effects. When not used correctly, however, synthetic wrinkle fillers may cause permanent disfigurement.

Synthetic wrinkle fillers include:

Wrinkle Filler: Radiesse

Ingredient: Calcium hydroxylapatite suspended in gel

Effects: Typically one year; some research shows that the body begins producing collagen around the micro-spheres, which might lead to longer lasting effects over time.

FDA approved for: Long-lasting fill of deep lines, including folds around the nose

FYI: The filler can clump when injected into the lips. There is also a risk of allergy.

Wrinkle Filler: Sculptra

Main Ingredient: Synthetic poly-L-lactic acid

Effects: Typically up to one year

FDA approved for: Volumizing for HIV patients suffering from loss of facial structure

FYI: The ingredients in this filler are made for deep injections below the muscles and not for injecting into fine lines.

Collagen Wrinkle Fillers

One of the first wrinkle fillers developed was made from a purified form of collagen extracted mostly from cows. Although it worked well and offered a natural looking line and crease fill, the results didn't last long. Most collagen injections began to break down as soon as one month after

treatment. Because these wrinkle fillers were made from an animal source, they also had a higher rate of allergic reaction and required allergy testing before treatment.

New ways of processing the collagen have helped reduce risks. In addition, new forms of synthetic collagens are making these injections safer and more useful for a wider range of people. Although the results are generally shorter lived than other wrinkle fillers, many believe the results are better and look more natural.

Side effects of collagen injections include some risk of allergic reaction (mostly for those still using bovine sources) as well as bruising and redness at the site of the injection.

Collagen injections include:

Wrinkle Filler: Cosmoplast/Cosmoderm

Ingredient: Collagen made from purified human tissue grown in a lab. Does not require a skin test.

Effects: Up to six months depending on the area that is treated

FDA approved for: Frown lines, crow's feet, forehead lines, vertical lip lines (also called bleeding lipstick lines), nose-to-mouth lines, lip border, scar filling. Cosmoplast is used for deeper, more pronounced wrinkles.

FYI: One of the few fillers that is recommended for treating fine lines around the eyes

Autologous Wrinkle Fillers

This category includes wrinkle fillers made from substances, usually fat, taken from your own body. The fat is normally taken from the thighs, buttocks, or stomach. They are most often used for fine lines and creases on the face.

Though these aren't commonly used, they can be an option for some people.

Risks for these injections are similar to other wrinkle fillers, including bruising, redness, and swelling at the site of the injection. You need, though, to have two procedures (one to remove the fat and one to inject it). Both, though, can be done in one visit. Additional purification steps taken in the lab can be costly and time consuming. Results can be permanent, although you may need a series of injections. Because the fillers come from your body, these injections do not require FDA approval.

Minimizing Risks and Increasing Good Outcomes for All Wrinkle Fillers

Wrinkle fillers are among the safest cosmetic procedures in use today. But there are also things you can do to help ensure your treatment is safe:

- Don't let price be your guide. If you are offered a wrinkle filler treatment that costs far less than the standard treatment, it's likely some compromises are being made, either in the skill of the provider or the quality of the product. Never risk making a bargain with your face.
- All wrinkle fillers should be done in a medical setting with sterile instruments. Treatments done in homes, hotels, spas, or resorts are not being done in medical environments, regardless of who is doing them.
- Do not get injectable wrinkle fillers from sources outside a doctor's office. Know what you are being injected with, and ask your doctor if an FDA-approved wrinkle filler is being used and if it was purchased directly from the maker. There have been reports of everything from industrial-grade silicone to baby oil to unapproved fillers being used. If a provider won't give you information about what will be used, don't let that provider do the procedure.