

Procedures for that desired look

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BOTOX, Thermage, Laser Peel - the language of cosmetic medicine is starting to creep into mainstream vocabulary. Most of the jargon refers to non-invasive procedures, and this is hardly surprising. In recent years, growth in non-surgical cosmetic procedures has been nothing short of exponential.

Says consultant plastic surgeon Dr Martin Huang: 'The trend in cosmetic surgery and medicine is that we are moving more and more towards less and less invasive surgery and even completely non-invasive procedures. This trend is fuelled by an increasing demand for these types of procedures and the need to minimise down time, or even to eliminate it altogether.'

At Dr Huang's practice, The Cosmetic Surgery Clinic, demand for non-invasive procedures far surpasses that of surgical procedures. Nonetheless, the surgical side of the business continues to grow steadily, given the clinic's reputation for performing complex and technically challenging cosmetic surgery operations.

Surgical procedures

Most cosmetic surgery operations are day surgery procedures with no hospitalisation required. Some of the more frequently performed surgical procedures at The Cosmetic Surgery Clinic are:

Lower Blepharoplasty or lower eyelid surgery

Dr Huang takes an unconventional approach to the fairly common procedure of rejuvenating the lower eyelid. People with eye bags typically also have a groove below the eye bag. The conventional approach to lower eyelid surgery is to surgically remove the eye bag, then inject filler into the groove later.

Dr Huang has refined a surgical technique in which fat from the eye bag is not removed but is instead redistributed to the groove as part of the same procedure.

Says Dr Huang: 'Instead of wasting the fat, we fill the groove with the patient's own fat, thus correcting the bulge of the eye bag and addressing the second problem of the groove beneath the eye bag, all in one operation. The technique is laborious and exacting but after years of practice my results have been consistently good.'

Upper Blepharoplasty or upper eyelid surgery

The two most popular upper eyelid surgeries are the creation of double eyelids and ptosis repair or the correction of droopy eyelids.

Departing from the norm for most plastic surgery practices, Dr Huang creates a double eyelid by using a stitching technique that requires no incision and leaves no scars. Says Dr Huang: 'The

procedure only involves sewing, there is no cutting at all, but the technique is advanced and can fail if not done well.'

Droopy upper eyelids, which are characterised by sleepy looking eyes and absent or multiple creases on the eyelid, are corrected by a procedure known as ptosis repair. People with droopy eyelids often look tired or downcast. At its most severe, ptosis can cause obstruction of the visual field. The challenge in ptosis repair is to get perfect symmetry, says Dr Huang. 'With the eyes, even a half mm discrepancy is noticeable.' The other challenge is to identify mild forms of ptosis and to address it early, rather than to treat it as just another case of double eyelid surgery.

Rhinoplasty or cosmetic surgery of the nose

The bread and butter of an Asian nose job is to place an implant in the nose but more can be done, says Dr Huang. 'If you listen to your patients closely and what they really want to achieve for their noses, it becomes apparent that an implant alone is often an inadequate solution. The Asian nose is characterised by a round, bulbous tip covered by a thick layer of oily skin that obscures its internal architecture. There is a lot we can do in terms of modifying the size and shape of the cartilage of the nasal tip in order to refine it, make it narrower and sharper and to give it more definition.'

One peculiarity of Dr Huang's practice is that most of the nose jobs he performs are complex and long, reflecting his belief that the more refined the desired end result, the more work needs to be done.

LipoSelection by Vaser

An advanced alternative to traditional liposuction, LipoSelection precisely and efficiently removes unwanted fat using ultrasound technology. A small probe that transmits sound energy is used to first liquefy the fat before it is removed from the body by gentle suction. LipoSelection may be used to treat various areas like the abdomen, buttocks, hips, love handles and arms. It is particularly helpful for areas where the fat is known to be tough, fibrous and difficult to remove using conventional liposuction, such as the back. As this technique selectively targets fatty tissue while minimising damage to other tissues, patients experience minimal pain, swelling and bruising, shorter down time, and enjoy smoother contours compared with conventional liposuction.

Non-surgical procedures

Non-invasive procedures are typically outpatient treatments that are performed with topical or no anaesthesia. These are some of the latest and most sought after treatments:

Thermage

Thermage is a non-invasive procedure that tightens loose or saggy skin to produce a 'lift' without incisions. Using Radio Frequency (RF) energy, the Thermage process works from within to tighten collagen fibres and jumpstart new collagen production in a single treatment. It can rejuvenate the upper face, by lifting the brows, for example, and in the lower face it can reduce the appearance of aging by improving nasolabial grooves and jowls. A new Thermage treatment to rejuvenate the upper eyelid while ensuring the safety of the eyes was launched recently.

ReFirme Skin Tightening

Using a combination of RF and infrared energy, this treatment also tightens the skin to produce a non-surgical lift. However, unlike Thermage, this is achieved via a series of six treatments performed every two to three weeks. It is particularly helpful for tightening the skin of the lower

eyelid and reducing the appearance of eyebags, thus giving patients a non-surgical option for lower eyelid rejuvenation.

Micro laser peel

The micro laser peel is a high-tech laser peel of the skin that improves skin texture by reducing wrinkles, refining pores and acne scars, and tightening the skin. It also improves skin colour by removing sun damage and creating a uniform skin tone. It is ultra precise in its workings. The down time after a peel, when the patient needs to protect her skin from the sun, can range from two to 12 days, depending on the depth of peeling. This has given rise to the term 'weekend peel' to describe mild peels performed at the weekend so as to allow clients to go back to work as usual on Monday but with dewy, baby-smooth skin.