

September 5, 2000

Woman's World

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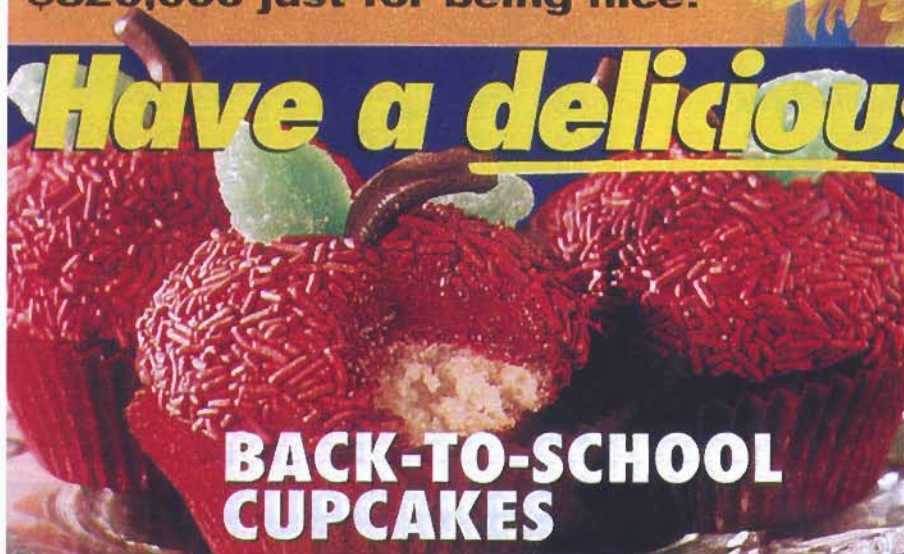
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BACK-TO-SCHOOL CUPCAKES



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Beauty breakthroughs at your doctor's office now

Wish you looked a few years younger... but hate the idea of a face lift, with all that pain and expense? No problem! The latest dermatology and plastic surgery breakthroughs take off years without surgery



Worried about crow's-feet? Doctors have the key to making them vanish.

You look fabulous! What's your secret?" In the past, looking 10 years younger could only mean one thing: you'd had plastic surgery. And it was rarely a secret you could keep for long. If the results

Patients look five years younger after laser-skin resurfacing

themselves weren't glaringly obvious, the long weeks in recovery and telltale scars would give you away.

These days, the acceptance of plastic surgery has never been higher, and more women (and men) are opting for it than ever before. But like your age or your weight, why should everyone else know about it?

The answer, say experts like Beverly Hills facial plastic surgeon William J. Binder, M.D., author of *Management of Facial Lines and Wrinkles*: they shouldn't. "Gone are the days when a woman with a

face lift had an obvious wind-tunnel or deer-in-the-headlights look," he says. "Women want dramatic yet natural-looking results, with a minimum of pain."

And that's exactly what they're getting, thanks to brand-new techniques like laser skin resurfacing, Botox injections and more. Many of them don't require anesthesia, much less going under the knife—and they're much more affordable than surgery.

Here are a few of the latest and best options today's doctors can provide:

1 Super skin-smoothing creams

Alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs) were hot news a few years ago—creams, lotions and face washes containing them exploded in popularity after studies showed they could exfoliate the skin's dull, lifeless top layer, improving smoothness, texture and radiance. And doctors say face creams containing tretinoin, an ingredient derived from vitamin A, are even better: they penetrate below the skin's surface lay-

er, treating the deeper layers where wrinkles form. And studies have shown they can reduce fine wrinkles, smooth out rough skin and fade age spots in 78% of women who try them.

Tretinoin products are available by prescription, and doctors say the most recently FDA-approved product, Renova, is the best. Unlike older tretinoin products, Renova has an emollient cream base, which has the added benefit of moisturizing the skin and reducing side effects like redness, dryness and irritation. And studies

show it can prevent the sun-related skin damage that causes new wrinkles to form.

Prefer a nonprescription product? Experts recommend looking for those containing at least 4% AHAs, or 3-10% L-ascorbic acid—also known as vitamin C. Research indicates vitamin-C serums smooth out the skin and prevent new lines from forming by reversing sun damage and prompting the production of collagen, the underlying support network that keeps skin taut and youthful.

2 Injections that smooth away every wrinkle

Botox injections are the gold standard for eliminat-

ing crow's feet and forehead grooves, but they can't fill in thinning lips or laugh lines around the mouth. Now there's something that can: hyaluronic acid.

"It's very effective for wrinkles around the forehead, eyes and mouth, and it can also plump up the lips," says cosmetic and laser surgeon Ronald Moy, M.D., at the University of California-Los Angeles. It lasts up to six months and costs \$350.

And be on the lookout for Artecoll, an injectable acrylic implant that may smooth out wrinkles and fill in lips permanently. It's currently undergoing FDA safety trials here.

3 Pain-free skin resurfacing

"When laser skin resurfacing was introduced a few years ago, it was revolutionary," says Dr. Moy. But intense-pulsed-light technology could be even better.

"Conventional lasers destroy the top layer of skin, but this treatment penetrates the skin without damaging it," says Dr. Moy. "It stimulates collagen production to rejuvenate the skin, removing spots and fine wrinkles." The result: patients look five years younger or more after an average of five treatments.

The best part: no redness, no pain, "and you can go out right after having a treatment and not feel self-

conscious," he says. Treatments average \$400 each.

4 And even more natural-looking face lifts

That's what surgeons like Dr. Binder are producing with a two-step strategy called facial contouring, which combines a face lift with cheek and/or chin implants. "The implants replace the padding of fat we lose as we age," he explains. "They fill out the face, avoiding the tight, hollow appearance that some face lifts can produce."

And while a wide range of standard facial implants are available, more and more doctors are creating their own—and custom-fitting them to a three-dimensional model of each individual patient's face. "That way, we know the implant is going to look natural and

Tretinoin creams fade age spots in 78% of women

flattering before we do the surgery," Dr. Binder says.

The procedure takes as little as 45 minutes, and recovery takes a matter of days for the implant surgery alone—about four hours and two or three weeks' recovery time if combined with a face lift. Standard implants alone range from \$3,000-\$4,000, custom implants about twice as much.

—Barbara Cruz

How to pay for your beauty breakthrough

In general, insurance companies refuse to pay for treatments they designate as cosmetic. "But there are several ways to finance them," says Susan Collini, co-author of *Two Girlfriends Get Real About Cosmetic Surgery*.

One of the most popular is charging your treatment to a credit card—preferably one of the low-interest-rate cards that many institutions offer. "In some cases, the rate will

increase after six months, but there's usually no penalty to then switch your balance to another card," she says.

Or, ask your doctor for help. These days, many will help arrange a payment plan through their offices. The American Society of Plastic Surgery can also help arrange a loan through MBNA America; call 800-626-2760 for details.

—Alex Kay