



is pioneering custom-made cheek implants. “The implants act like your facial skeleton. There’s no protrusion or awkward shift as you age,” Jacono says. He points out that as you get older and your skin loses elasticity, fillers can weigh down soft tissue and actually cause the very jowliness you’re trying to banish.

Bespoke cheeks, like a couture wardrobe, require a larger investment (of both time and money) than off-the-rack implants. The first step is a CT scan that reveals the patient’s skull and muscle structure. Any filler you might have will also show on the scan, and that can be dissolved before the surgery. Working with an engineer, the doctor uses this image to create a 3-D model so he can see the face from all angles and fashion customized molds. It then takes two to three weeks to make the actual implants, from FDA-approved silicone. Dur-

**FINAL FIT**  
Custom cheek implants eliminate the need for filler every few months—but they come with a hefty price tag.

ing a one-hour outpatient procedure done with the patient in twilight sleep, a small incision is made inside the mouth above the molars to lift tissue and affix the implants to the cheekbones with titanium screws.

“The implant is like a spacer between the ligament and bone. It doesn’t let the cheek slide down. It’s instant youthification,” Binder says. The entire process can cost \$30,000; because it’s so individualized, it is unlikely to become less expensive in the near

future. While you can undergo the procedure at any age, in general younger women seek it out for more definition, while women over 40 look for lift. Implants are not recommended for people with fuller faces, and they can be easily removed if the patient is unhappy.

One 39-year-old patient of Jacono’s decided to forgo fillers and go straight for implants. “I wanted to solve the problem fundamentally,” she says. “The implants lifted everything, gave me a chiseled face, and took away the hollows under my eyes. Custom is more expensive, but you don’t want to look like you’re from *Star Trek*.” «

## The Other CHEEK

AS FILLER FATIGUE SETS IN, IS IT WORTH CONSIDERING A PERMANENT FIX?

By Emily Listfield

“People are terrified when I tell them I don’t want to do more,” says New York dermatologist Patricia Wexler. “But if fillers aren’t lasting, or you’re no longer getting the results you want, another injection is not the answer.” The problem is that the alternative—cheek implants—has tended to result in a decidedly unnatural marionette visage.

“They were often too big, didn’t blend into the surrounding structure, and cast a shadow,” says New York plastic surgeon Andrew Jacono. “It was like buying a cheap suit.” So now Jacono, as well as Beverly Hills plastic surgeon William Binder,

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