

Beauty and Age: Often Restless Companions

Dr. Cynthia Gregg, of Cynthia Gregg, MD, FACS Face and Body Specialists, in Cary, is an expert in revitalizing the appearance of the aging face and, in the process, often restoring the confidence of youth.

“Good skin care with quality products is an essential foundation for any cosmetic rejuvenation procedure,” she explains. “Facial rejuvenation and anti-aging interventions range from non-surgical to surgical options, and there are many choices in between. In our practice we offer a buffet of anti-aging options, some of which work together synergistically, and some of which are just fine à la carte.”

“At one end of the buffet,” Dr. Gregg explains, “are the basic things most of us already know to do—skin care with protective sun screen and moisturizers, for example. However, while we may use these products daily, most of us probably don’t realize how important the products you choose actually are. Mass marketed skin creams are just that—made for the masses. But not everyone can effectively use the same skin care products because our skin types are so varied. There’s hyper-pigmentation, hypo-pigmentation, sun damage, vitiligo, rosacea, dry skin, or excessively oily skin, to name just a few variations.”

“One thing all skin has in common, however, is that we all lose certain components as we age—including collagen,

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elastin, the ability to hold hydration, and hyaluronic acids. The rate at which this happens and what goes first is individualized and largely genetic—but eventually it happens to us all and is, at least in part, responsible for the look of aging.

“The estheticians in our practice are invaluable because they are able to assess what is happening with each patient’s skin and create a targeted skin care regimen for each person,” explains Dr. Gregg. “And the scientific advancements are remarkable. For example, there are products now that have been proven to actually increase collagen amounts in the skin by stimulating your body to make it. And increased collagen equals a more youthful look.”

“What is important to understand about effective skin care,” Dr. Gregg points out, “is that it is the essential foundation for any more invasive procedure. Moving down the buffet line, some of the more invasive skin

care options we offer include lasers and chemical peels. These are great options for people who want to address facial texture, tone, and wrinkles, to eliminate brown spots and correct sun damage and broken blood vessels. But coming in for a laser treatment or a peel once a month is pointless if you’re not faithful about your regular, every-day skin care regimen. It’s like going to a personal trainer once a month without exercising between sessions, and expecting the trainer to keep you in shape. It’s not going to happen. And you will not achieve the look of your skin that you want without maintaining an effective, faithful skin care regimen between treatments.”

FACIAL REJUVENATION

Comments Dr. Gregg, “As it turns out, beauty—or rather a rejuvenated, youthful look—is not only skin deep. Layers of tissue, muscle, and fat, along with collagen, elastin, and hyaluronic acids all come together to create the look of youth we wish would last forever. And as these layers diminish and change—the look of aging begins.”

“Lasers can be quite effective at minor tightening of the skin,” Dr. Gregg says, “but laser treatment will not reduce sagging or excess skin left behind as we lose fat and the underlying structure that supports the skin. Lasers iron out the minor wrinkles, but it’s like this: if your pants are too long, an iron won’t get rid of that excess length. That is where the face lift comes in.”

“There was a time,” notes Dr. Gregg, “when it was thought addressing the skin was enough. However, as the field of plastic surgery has grown—as well as the understanding of the process of aging—new techniques have developed, revolutionizing those early days responsible for the tightly pulled look of a face lift.”

“Back then, surgeons would simply lift the skin—pulling it tight over the muscle,” Dr. Gregg says. “The problem was—in addition to the unnatural appearance it created—that the effect didn’t last because skin doesn’t hold. Without adjustment to the underlying structure to account for the loss of volume, muscle sagging, loss of fat, and even bone changes that all come with aging, the skin simply stretches out again.”

“So now we use the SMAS—superficial musculoaponeurotic system—to get a more natural look that lasts. This is where we lift not just the skin, but the muscles underneath the skin. By grabbing these muscles and pulling them up, we avoid creating tension in the skin. The important thing is realizing it’s not just the skin—it’s the whole structure underneath that creates the look of youth or age.”

Dr. Gregg, long recognized as an expert in her field, adds a unique component to the



PREMATURE AGING

“**J**udy” grew up at the beach in the 1960s, and as she puts it, she and her friends “couldn’t get enough sun.” It was a time when sun exposure risk wasn’t fully understood and sunscreen not widely used; as a result, Judy ended up with sun damaged and prematurely aged skin.

“I’m blond and fair skinned,” Judy says, “so between that and the baby oil and iodine and all the time in the sun abusing my skin, I had brown spots and wrinkles beyond my age.”

“I was 65 when I decided to do the face lift—that was last year. I decided to do it because, physically, I feel great. I go to the gym and stay fit and active. I love my life and feel really good. But my appearance didn’t match how I felt inside. People would often comment that I looked tired; so, I finally decided life is too short to go around looking worn out.”

Judy had previously been to Dr. Gregg’s office for some of the other services on the long buffet of skin care options. “I always enjoyed the service there and the aestheticians always did a wonderful job. So, I had a consult with Dr. Gregg about a face lift. She showed me photos and went over all the options. She told me what would look best given what I was working with, and realistically what outcomes I could anticipate. She was thorough, honest, and engaging. I decided to go for it.”

“I honestly couldn’t be happier with the outcome,” Judy says smiling. “It looks so natural many friends aren’t even sure what’s changed, they just know I look different—better. I’ve had a few of them say things like ‘wow, you look great,’ just out of the blue, but none has asked what I’ve had done. And no one comments that I look tired anymore. The wrinkles from all that sun damage and the loose skin around my neck are gone—my husband even commented on being better able to see the contour of my face. The recovery was even easier than Dr. Gregg had prepared me for, and I was back at work in three weeks instead of six. Now I’m going back in for some laser treatments to work on the discoloration from the sun. It’s amazing to have all that I need in one place. The best thing for me is, I don’t really look different. I look like *me*—the me I remember, know, and I feel like inside. I’ve very grateful to Dr. Gregg for that.”



face lifts she performs. “I call it the mid-face lift” she says. “Basically, I add another vector of pull that actually addresses the apple of the cheeks. A lot of classic face lifts only pull laterally, resulting in a drapery look. By lifting up and then pulling laterally, I get a more natural look. It’s an extra incision, and it’s a choice each of my patients has to make for themselves. But when they’ll let me, the results we have achieved have been quite nice.” h&h

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