

The uRepublic Guide to Filler Injections: Calcium Hydroxylapatite (CHA)

Filler injections no longer use animal collagen, but safer, longer-lasting materials such as Calcium Hydroxylapatite that do not require prior testing for allergy.

What is the difference between CHA fillers and botulinum toxin injections?

CHA fillers correct established facial lines and furrows, and plump up the ageing face, while botulinum toxin relaxes the facial muscles that produce expression lines. In general, botulinum toxin injections are best started before lines (wrinkles, creases or furrows) become established. On the other hand, fillers are only useful after the onset of established lines, except for shaping procedures – such as chin, nose and cheek shaping – that can be carried out at any stage of adult life. Fillers are often used in conjunction with botulinum toxin, as their actions are synergistic. Most patients start with muscle relaxing botulinum injections (those 30 years and over) to reduce excessive expression lines that can lead to permanent wrinkles. For people aged 40 years and over, permanent lines and volume loss may have occurred, and these can be improved with fillers.

What is the difference between CHA fillers (radiesse) and Hyaluronan fillers (restylane, estellis, juvederm) fillers?

CHA filler is a thicker gel and lasts longer, and may be preferred for larger areas such as plumping up sunken cheeks and treating deeper furrows and lines. The hyaluronan fillers do not last as long but are available in varying degrees of consistency, making them more versatile. Thick hyaluronan fillers can be used for deeper lines such as the cheek furrows, while thinner hyaluronan fillers can be used on finer lines such as the crows feet around the eyes and smokers lines on the upper lip. Hyaluronan fillers are preferred for lip enhancement and shaping. CHA fillers are generally best for the mid to lower face except the lip.

What can CHA fillers do for me?

Deep lines and furrows

- Nasolabial furrows (side of nose to corner of mouth)
- Marionette lines (corner of mouth to jaw)
- Elevate down-turning of mouth corners

Loss of skin volume

- Hollow or sunken cheeks through weight loss, illness or disease
- HIV and other disease related wasting of the face
- Back of hands

Other shaping procedures

- Cheek bones
- Jaw line
- Contour correction of defects (acne, trauma, surgical)

What does the procedure involve?

The procedure involves multiple fine injections to the treatment area. Anaesthetic may be required depending on the region. A cream anaesthetic applied 15–30 minutes beforehand may be helpful. Many patients find the application of ice alone sufficiently numbing to reduce the injection discomfort to a manageable level.

At the completion of the treatment, the doctor/ nurse may need to massage the treated area to help mould the filler into place.

What happens after treatment, and how long will the results last?

Immediately after treatment, puncture marks may be slightly visible but usually settle within half an hour. Transient redness may develop at the time of the treatment and settle within a few hours. Light make-up may be applied if desired. Additional application of ice may be helpful to decrease bruising, but isn't essential. It's not necessary to continue to massage the area unless instructed by your doctor. Most patients feel comfortable enough to resume their work and normal activities immediately after treatment.

The treated area may look slightly more puffy than the effect of the filler alone, due to temporary tissue swelling. At times this may be asymmetrical but will settle over the next 24 hours. Bruising may develop either at the time of the injection or over the next few days but is usually not marked, and will settle within 4–5 days. Patients on anti-inflammatories or aspirin may be at increased risk of bruising.

It's advisable to return for a review after one month – where the results will be checked, and a touch-up treatment may be necessary for further enhancement. Over a 3-month period, the gel will soften and will have a different texture and feel beneath the skin. This is usual and expected as your collagen will have begun to fill the surrounding scaffold of calcium particles. The filler effect can be expected to last up to 18 months. Some patients are happier to have annual touch-ups. There is also personal variation in the longevity of the filler in different individuals.

What are the unwanted side effects of fillers?

When the injection is too superficial, beading (small visible lumps) and discolouration may occur, which is dependent on technique. This usually settles with time.

Rarely, cyst or granuloma (lump) may develop at the injection site. This is usually temporary and can be treated with corticosteroids. Infection is another theoretical problem which is rarely seen.

Accidental injection into skin arteries can also potentially lead to skin ulcers and even blindness. These complications are associated with the older bovine collagen injections rather than newer fillers such as CHA, although the theoretical possibility remains. The vast majority of injectors will never experience this complication over a lifetime of treating patients.

Are CHA fillers suitable for everyone?

We do not treat:

- Pregnant or breast-feeding women
- Children under age 18 without parental consent
- Current significant skin disease / infections such as cold sores at the site of treatment
- Individuals with a history of collagen/ scarring/ connective tissue disorders
- Anyone with emotional, mental or medical condition that may impair judgment
- Anyone with a history of significant adverse reactions to filler injections
- Patients preferring a shorter-lasting filler may be better off with alternative fillers such as the hyaluronan fillers
- Proven allergy to the constituents of the CHA filler

What other things do I need to know?

The microspheres in CHA fillers can be seen in X-ray and CT Scan tests. So when you're having such imaging tests, it's important to inform your doctor that you have CHA injected in your face beforehand. It's unlikely that your doctor will find this a problem as long as they know.

How to minimise bruising

If possible, stop blood thinners such as Vit E, fish oil, aspirin and non steroidal anti-inflammatories up to 5 days before treatment. Stopping the medication will reduce the likelihood of bruising. However, it is not necessary to stop them if you need the above medication for established medical conditions.