

The uRepublic Guide to Filler Injections: Hyaluronans

Filler injections no longer use collagen, but a safer, longer-lasting and naturally occurring material such as hyaluronans. These are naturally found in all living tissues, including humans, and don't require prior testing for allergy.

What is the difference between fillers and botulinum toxin (botox/ dysport) injections?

Fillers correct established facial lines and add volume to the treated areas (such as the cheeks or lips) while botulinum toxin relaxes the facial muscles that produce expression lines. In general, botulinum toxin injections are best started before established lines (wrinkles, creases or furrows). On the other hand, fillers are only useful after the onset of established lines, except for shaping procedures – such as lip 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 can Hyaluronan fillers do for me?

Lip shaping

- Lip definition
- Lip plumping
- Elevate down-turning of mouth corners

Lines and furrows

- Nasolabial furrows (side of nose to corner of mouth)
- Marionette lines (corner of mouth to jaw)
- Vertical frown lines between the eyebrows
- Horizontal worry lines on the forehead
- Crows feet

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. Around the lips where it's sensitive, 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 or nurse may need to massage the treated area to help mould the filler into place.

Can fillers be combined with other procedures?

Yes fillers can be safely combined with all of the listed procedures, even on the same day. Botulinum and fillers can be performed together and are considered a great match and can be performed on the same day. Fillers can also be used together with BBL/IPL, resurfacing lasers (Sellas, Profractional) and skin tightening devices (DermaRF, SkinTyte). In general it is best to perform fillers after the resurfacing and skin tightening procedures but this will be at the discretion of the doctor.

How many treatment sessions will I need?

In general the frequency of re-treatment will depend on the longevity of the filler – usually 6–12 months. Ongoing treatment tends to lengthen the duration probably because of the collagen stimulating effects of the filler within the skin. This applies to correction of localised lines and folds and structures such as rejuvenating the lip. Increasingly, fillers are being successfully used to replace volume loss involving the mid-face. Mid-face volume correction requires larger volumes of fillers that can be delivered via 2 methods:

Fillers can be delivered in larger volumes for instant correction (instant filling)

Filler can be delivered at intervals over a period of time for gradual correction (fractional filling)

Patient preference for the nature of correction will dictate which option is preferred. Larger volume instant correction is immediate and has a dramatic 'make-over' effect that some patients will prefer. Other patients might prefer a more gradual and incremental correction – over 12–18 months. The drawback with fractional filling is that you need more attendances and you may not perceive the initial improvement to be adequate – but that is the incremental nature of fractional filling where subtle improvement occurs with each treatment session. The end-result and cost for both methods are similar. The cost of the filler injection is based on the amount of filler used. Once the desired level of correction is achieved, annual top-ups will be necessary to maintain the effects.

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

Immediately after treatment, puncture marks may be slightly visible but usually settles within half an hour. Make-up may be applied if desired. Additional application of ice may be helpful to decrease bruising but not essential. It is not necessary to continue to massage the area unless instructed by your doctor.

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.

The filler duration depends on the 'thickness' of the filler and the treatment areas. A 'thinner' filler usually lasts 4–6 months while a 'thicker' filler will last 6–12 months. Areas of high mobility such as around the eyes and mouth may also disperse the filler faster, leading to a shorter life. There is also personal variation in the longevity of the filler in different individuals. The longevity of fillers is likely to improve with repeat treatments once the desired level of correction is reached. Top-up maintenance is required every year.

What are the unwanted side effects of Hyaluronan 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 but can be released by needling. Uneven filling can be corrected with antidote injections of hyaluronidase that rapidly dissolves the excess hyaluronan filler.

1 in every 10,000 treatments may induce a hypersensitivity reaction that may result in persistent swelling, inflammation, cyst or granuloma (lump) formation. This is usually temporary and can be treated with corticosteroids.

Theoretically, accidental injection into skin arteries can lead to skin ulcers and even blindness. These complications are associated with the older bovine collagen injections rather than hyaluronans. The vast majority of injectors will never experience this complication over a lifetime of treating patients.

Are Hyaluronan 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