

## Got Lip Lines? Here's What a Dermatologist Would Do

Call them smoker's lines, lipstick lines, or whatever you like, but fine lines around the mouth are telltale signs of your real age and some not-so-healthy habits (hello smoking and tanning). Fortunately, there are more treatments than ever before that can literally erase those lines from your face.

By Denise Mann, MS

### How you got wrinkles around your mouth



Even if you never smoked in your life, you can develop fine lines around the mouth from sipping through a straw, whistling a tune, pursing your lips in frustration, or even overdoing it on those duck-face selfies. "Minor lips lines are caused by aging and sun damage," explains New York City plastic surgeon Norman Rowe, MD. "Larger lips lines are caused by muscle overactivity." Regardless of the cause, top cosmetic doctors have more tools than ever before to help delete your lip lines and prevent them from coming back.

### Neuromodulators



If we're talking about fine, moderate (not too deep) lip lines, neuromodulator injections such as Botox, Dysport, or Xeomin can often paralyze them into submission, says Midlothian, Virginia-based cosmetic facial surgeon Joe Niamtu, DMD. "This helps relax the muscle tension around the mouth and makes a small, but generally noticeable difference." "Prejuvenation" is a big buzzword in aesthetics today, and it has a role to play in staving off severe lip lines, adds Joel Cohen, MD, a dermatologist in Lone Tree, Colorado. "If I see patients in their 20s and maybe early 30s, and I use Botox, Dysport, or Xeomin in low dosages to soften the muscles, these columns are less prominent, less deep, and less likely to imprint the skin." Some effects are visible immediately, but it can

take a couple of weeks for these neuromodulators to fully kick in. Results last anywhere from two to four months. Cost varies by amount needed and often the geographical location of the medical practice. Here's how to find a doctor you trust.

## Fillers



For deeper static lines, hyaluronic-acid based dermal fillers are the way to go, says New York City plastic surgeon David Shafer, MD. Hyaluronic acid is found naturally in almost every cell in our body (especially the skin), but our supply tends to dwindle with advancing age. "Some hyaluronic acid fillers can provide volume to plump the lip—Juvederm and Restylane—while others are much thinner and can help fill lines without adding as much bulk—Juvederm Volbella, Restylane Silk, and Belotero," he says. "Since the lips lose volume with age, I often suggest a combination of natural plumping and line filling." For people who have mild lines in the upper lip, Dr. Cohen injects the filler very superficially so it blurs them. He also likes to pretreat

the area a week or two earlier with a little bit of Botox, Dysport, or Xeomin just to soften that musculature. Cost is based on the type of filler, exact amount needed, and often the location of the practice medical practice. Exactly how long results last also varies by product. Hate needles? Fillerina Replenishing Treatment promises to plump up lip lines in two weeks. The gel, which comprises a blend of six hyaluronic acids, is released via a pen-like applicator that fills in fine lip lines.

## Lasers, lights, and peels



Needlephobes with fine lip lines have many options, Dr. Shafer adds. "The outer layer of the skin can be treated with superficial treatments such as laser resurfacing, radiofrequency energy, chemical peels, microneedling, dermabrasion, and other such treatments," he says. These treatments all remove the skin's uppermost layer, getting rid of dead skin cells and making room for new, healthier ones. "Treating the superficial layer helps improve skin texture, color, and soften very fine static lines." These treatments are quick and relatively pain-free with numbing cream, and there's minimal recovery depending on the type of treatment and how aggressive it is. Peels and laser treatments will have several days or more of redness, which you can conceal with makeup, he

says. (Here's how to use makeup to fake perfect skin.) A series of treatments is typically needed for optimum results. "For deeper etched lines, I like to use full-field erbium resurfacing lasers, which is done to a very deep level," Dr. Cohen says. The downside? There's some downtime with this aggressive, ablative (skin disruptin) procedure, he says. The upside? It's often one and done, meaning there's no need to come back for more treatments. "I often pre-treat these patients a week or two before with Botox or Dysport just to decrease the mechanical action of that underlying muscle contracting for a synergistic result," he adds.

## PRP: the newest kid on the block



Everyone is talking about platelet rich plasma (PRP), a substance in our own blood that is rich with growth factors. It's being used to treat hair loss, orthopedic injuries, and more, including lip lines. You probably heard that Kim Kardashian got a "vampire facial," which uses PRP to improve the results of microneedling. "PRP injections stimulate new collagen formation like spackling," says New York City facial plastic surgeon Sam Rizk, MD. Collagen is the main building block of healthy youthful skin, and as we age, our natural supply diminishes. "PRP works well for smoker's lines because it fills in the lines from the inside out." I use a combination of PRP and laser resurfacing for a one-two punch," Dr. Rizk says. He typically recommends

three treatments, spaced four to eight weeks apart, with visible improvement seen in the first month.

## An ounce of prevention ...



Applying sunscreen regularly and using a collagen booster or a wrinkle-fighting cream daily are among the best ways to keep lip lines away permanently, experts say. There are a host of lotions, potions, and dream creams on the market at various price points that promise to help erase lip lines. Top contenders include Peter Thomas Roth Un-Wrinkle® Lip Treatment, which hydrates the area and helps boost production of collagen, Olay Regenerist Micro Sculpting Cream Face Moisturizer that adds hydration to plump lip lines, and Jan Marini C-ESTA Lips, which contains collagen-promoting vitamin C. "Protecting your lips from the sun, always using sunblock, not smoking cigarettes, and getting preventative Botox will slow down the formation of these

lines," promises Dr. Rowe. In the meantime, use these makeup hacks to fake fuller, line-free lips.