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A Facelift at 35? Why Younger Women Are Going Under the Knife Now

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Illustration: Mari Fouz

They say that 60 is the new 40. But when it comes to facelifts, you might want to reverse those numbers.

Last year, driven by a desire to achieve “a more lifted appearance” and “address the heaviness in [her] lower face,” Carina Hrankowski, 38, underwent a facelift with Dr. Chia Chi Kao, a plastic surgeon in Santa Monica, Calif. The procedure took over 11 hours to perform and left her racked with anxiety. “I covered the mirror in my recovery suite, and there were moments where I began to panic and think, ‘What have I done?’” she said.

Though she had to lie flat for the first 24 hours and remain on a soft-food diet for four days post procedure, Hrankowski now says she’s finally happy with her reflection. “It doesn’t look like I’ve had any work done,” she said. “It’s magic.” The price tag? \$140,000.

On the other side of the country, Jessica Daniels, then 30, was feeling dissatisfied with how she looked on FaceTime calls. Her main gripe? A “fullness” under her chin. Daniels sought out a roughly \$65,000 lower facelift (which also included a lip lift, facial implants and fat grafting) from Dr. Ariel Rad, a plastic surgeon in Washington, D.C.

According to Dr. Sam Rizk, a facial plastic surgeon in New York, facelifts—traditionally seen as a “last resort” procedure for older women—are increasingly leaning more TikTok than AARP.

“Fifty used to be considered the sweet spot, but not anymore,” said Beverly Hills, Calif., facial plastic surgeon Dr. Babak Azizzadeh, adding that he is performing the surgery on a growing number of younger patients.

Doctors attribute the shift to several factors, including the rise of weight-loss drugs like Ozempic, which can leave skin sagging, and a new reliance on virtual interactions. “Our brain is exposed to our image at a much higher rate, which makes us more sensitized to aging changes,” said Dr. Patrick Byrne, chief of Cleveland Clinic’s Integrated Surgical Institute.

Looking at photos of herself drove Julie Martinez to decide on surgery at 39. To get “a more chiseled” jawline, the San Francisco real-estate agent opted for a \$120,000 facelift with Azizzadeh. It took Martinez, now 41, over eight weeks to recover from the surgery, which included a face, neck, brow and lower-eye lift. Despite the healing time, she says she feels more confident. “It was the best thing I ever did.”

Another reason doctors say younger women are going under the knife? The increasing use of cosmetic treatments like Botox and hyaluronic acid fillers, which many women turn to in their 20s. As Dr. Mike Nayak, a facial plastic surgeon in St. Louis, put it: “When you start Botox at 25, by the time you reach 40, getting a facelift seems like not such a big leap.”

That was the case for Amanda Hurd, a real-estate broker based in Santa Rosa Beach, Fla., who had been spending roughly \$15,000 a year on filler and other cosmetic treatments. In 2023, at age 43, she decided to “bite the bullet” and get a facelift (which included a neck lift and rhinoplasty) with Dr. Sean Alemi, a New York facial plastic surgeon. “I’ll get more use out of it now than if I did it when I was 60,” said Hurd, who paid \$71,000 for her surgery.

At 43, Florida real-estate broker Amanda Hurd opted for a face-lift, in addition to a neck lift and rhinoplasty, after spending thousands of dollars a year on dermal fillers. Alemi Facial Plastic Surgery

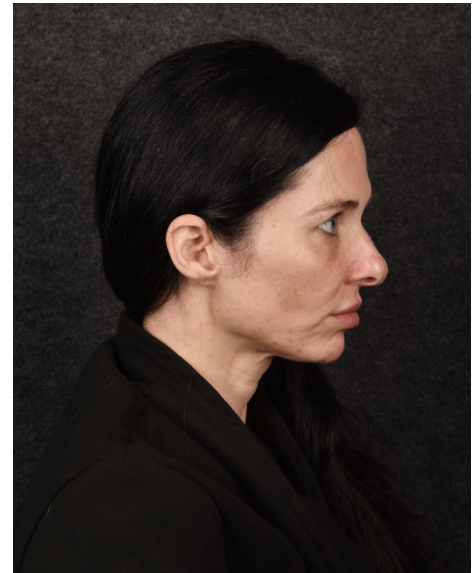
The Ozempic craze has also bumped up facelift requests from younger patients who have dropped a lot of weight and are left with slack skin, says Alemi. “Once skin laxity reaches a certain degree, a facelift is the most effective way to restore a youthful appearance,” he said.

And then there's the surgery itself, which has evolved over the decades to yield more natural-looking, longer-lasting results, and shorter recovery times.

Old-school facelifts pulled on the superficial layers of the skin and tissue to get rid of wrinkles and excess skin, often leaving telltale scars around the ears and under the chin. Today's techniques work at a deeper level to restore ligaments, fat pads and contours in a more organic-looking way. While incisions are still made around the ears, doctors are getting better at concealing scars by placing them inside the ear and minimizing them with lasers postsurgery.

"Because results from these procedures often go undetectable, surgery has become more appealing to younger patients," said Dr. Mark Murphy, a facial plastic surgeon in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

For his part, Dr. Amir Karam, a facial plastic surgeon in San Diego, counsels caution and says he's become more conservative about taking on patients. "As surgeons, we shouldn't be overzealous about operating at that first sign of laxity," Karam said. He advises those considering facelifts to remember that the surgery comes with potential complications, discomfort and downtime. Not to mention the cost.



(No) Scalpel, Please

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From left: Monastery The Deep Red LED Mask, \$700; Shani Darden Skin Care Facial Sculpting Wand, \$399

From left: Estée Lauder Re-Nutriv Ultimate Facial Massager, \$175; LYMA Laser, \$2,695

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