

Lip Service

Last issue we looked at the story behind the invention of PermaLip, the innovative lip implant which has taken the States by storm. Now, cosmetic surgeon Adrian Richards explains how he combines PermaLip with other procedures to help his patients regain a youthful appearance

I first came across PermaLip about three years ago, when a colleague mentioned he had been using it on his patients and getting great results. I've been offering injectable lip enhancement, using hyaluronic acid fillers, for years and it's great, but the disadvantage is that the treatment is very painful and the results are only temporary – you need to re-inject every six months.

More permanent solutions do exist, such as the silicone gel, which Leslie Ash had, but the problem there is that it's practically impossible to remove, and whilst it works well in most people, if – like Leslie – you have an allergic reaction to it, there isn't a lot that can be done and you end up looking ridiculous. There are other permanent options, but again they are very difficult to remove if you don't like the effect, and if you do manage to get them out there will be significant scarring.

So I was obviously keen to try out an alternative, and PermaLip came along at just the right time. The advantages PermaLip has over the other lip augmentation options are that it is simple to

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put in, it's simple to take out, and it offers a natural-looking, long-lasting result. I probably perform between 30 and 40 PermaLip operations each year, and my patients love the results.

Mixing it up

Generally speaking, there are two groups of people who come to me for lip augmentation with PermaLip: younger women who have naturally thin lips and just want to achieve a fuller pout, and older patients who want to restore the volume they once had in their lips, in an attempt to look younger.

A recent study has suggested that fuller lips are the key to looking younger, and I think a lot of women have taken this as gospel and rushed to get their lips plumped up. It is definitely true that thin lips are ageing, and for patients in their forties or fifties, PermaLip will do wonders to rejuvenate the face.

However, we need to be realistic here – an 80 year old lady is not going to look like a young girl again, just because her lips are fuller. To get the best results, you need to look at the

face as a whole. There are four core factors in facial ageing:

Active lines (frown lines) – these are caused by muscle contractions, and can be treated with Botox, or other injectables.

Gravity changes (drooping jowls) – these are traditionally treated with surgery

Volume loss – as you get older your face is less full and rounded than it used to be, and we can treat that by restoring volume. PermaLip is a very effective way to do that in the lips.

Skin quality – This one's difficult to quantify, but older skin tends to be duller and generally a bit tired looking. We can treat this with peels and various other non-invasive procedures.

When you're treating an ageing face, it's important to address all four of these issues, if you really want to regain that youthful look. When you first tell a patient this they can be a bit horrified, as it does sound quite daunting, but once you explain to them that it

is a gradual process and they don't have to have everything done at once they're usually quite keen.

You've only got to look at some of the older celebrities to see the benefits of treating the whole face, bit by bit – someone like Liz Hurley has doubtless had a lot of work done, but she didn't just turn up on the red carpet one day with a whole new face. She's had the odd thing done here or there, and no one really noticed, but when you stop and think about it you realise she's looking pretty good for her age.

It is also important to remember that everyone is different, and you need to really look at a person's face and its idiosyncracies in order to work out what will be the best treatment for them. One of the great things about PermaLip is that it comes in three widths, so even if someone has a very wide mouth you can fit it right to the corners of the lips to ensure a natural look, and three thicknesses, so you can start off small and work up to a much fuller pout if you so desire.

CS&AG

Treatment: PermaLip as outpatient treatment; from £1,500; from 45 minutes; local anaesthetic/Facelift with PermaLip from £8,300; 2.5 hours; general anaesthetic with two day hospital stay

Available from: Mr Adrian Richards is a consultant plastic surgeon at Aurora Clinics (Buckinghamshire, Northampton and London). For more information call 01844 214362 or visit www.aurora-clinics.co.uk

For more information on the PermaLip implant, visit www.surgisol.co.uk