

STICK YOUR NECK OUT

The 'Zoom boom' has hastened interest and development in treatments to smooth the neck and define the jawline.

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Technology has given us much, but it's also given us 'tech neck'.

As the phrase implies, our habit of hanging our head to intently study the screen in our hands has exacerbated both neck strain (treatable) and neck wrinkles (less treatable, until recently).

The affliction was a burgeoning phenomenon before the pandemic, with the development of advanced aesthetic treatments well underway. But experts say that with the demands of 24/7 connectedness, coupled with the inevitable self-scrutiny constant Zoom meetings bring, it's not surprising we're increasingly seeking solutions to smooth our necks and sharpen our jawlines sans surgery.

"We've all been affected by ... seeing ourselves on camera looking downwards, which accentuates our jowls, uneven jawline and neck ageing," says Dr Ellen Selkon, cosmetic physician and director of Clinic 42, of the reason for the spike in interest.

"Secondly, selfies are very rarely taken front-on these days; people often turn to the three-quarter view, which shows the jawline. A smooth, youthful jawline is associated with 'handsomeness' in males and elegance and beauty in females."

As we age, our skin loses its underlying structure and volume. The overlying skin becomes looser as collagen and elastin levels also decline, making it saggier and more prone to creasing.

With fewer sebaceous glands to provide oil but with our attention less focused on religiously applying skincare to the area, it's not surprising



the delicate area is prone to visible signs of ageing. While horizontal neck lines are part of the natural ageing process, repeated folding motions like constantly looking down at a screen can also have an impact on the quality of skin, similar to the creases that form between the brows if we squint too much.

"One term cosmetic physicians hear at least once a day is 'I hate my neck,'" admits Dr Michael Molton, President of the Cosmetic Physicians College of Australasia.

Botox or filler can play a part in smoothing the area, but Dr Molton says most concerns relate to loss of elastic tension in the skin itself.

While they have 'limited outcomes' when compared with surgery or a thread lift – which come with their own risks and challenges – he suggests seeking out non-invasive device-based treatments that help reknit and establish new collagen.

"These devices, collectively known in cosmetic medicine as 'non-ionising radiation' (NIR), are a mixed bag of light-based, radio-frequency, skin micro-perforation and ultrasonic technologies," says Dr Molton. "Light-based devices include fractionated lasers, preferably non-ablative."

While radio frequency and ultrasound treatments are increasingly offered for skin tightening, Dr Molton says that advanced options that combine the two in one treatment can be faster and more comfortable.

In terms of lasers, Dr Molton mentions that the skin on the neck doesn't have the healing capacity of the face, so they should be considered

with caution and carried out by experts, or risk burns and scarring. At home, the long-term benefits of dedicated neck-targeting skincare are related to softening and temporary surface tension. They are limited in their ability for dramatic transformation beyond that.

Yet the upside of the use of dedicated neck-targeting skincare is increasing consideration of active skincare application all the way down the neck to the décolletage; something that's often an oversight.

Skincare expert Paula Begoun, founder of Paula's Choice Skincare, says extending proven skin-boosting ingredients you use on your face down your neck is as effective as using targeted products.

"Antioxidants, skin-replenishing ingredients, soothing agents, retinol, enriching oils, and butters are essential, as is SPF," says Begoun.

Clothing often exposes the neck and chest to the sun, making these areas especially vulnerable, she says.

"Always protect them with daily broad-spectrum sunscreen of SPF 30 or greater. It's the single best step you can take to keep this area of your skin looking youthful and smooth for years to come," says Begoun.

Much like many skin challenges, prevention is better than the cure – so here's your reminder to stop the mindless scrolling! – but the cure has sure come a long way. **MF**

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The skin of the neck and décolletage is one of the first places on the body to show signs of sun damage and ageing. Help maintain a youthful, healthy appearance with our expert tips. mindfood.com/neck-care

TOP TREATMENTS

FILLERS

Profilo is the current injectable treatment du jour, given its ability to restore the features of youthful skin. Made of hyaluronic acid and delivered into the surface layer of skin, it differs from previous fillers in that it isn't intended to add precise volume to one small area. Instead, it distributes evenly to give an overall smoother appearance to ageing and sagging tissue. Experts refer to its benefits as 'bio revitalisation' as it also stimulates collagen and elastin for long-term benefits.

Volux is the newest product from the Juvéderm brand of hyaluronic fillers made by experts Allergan. The unique hyaluronic acid molecular structure is denser and thicker than previous options, which is why it's specifically designed for sculpting the lower face. It can be used to improve facial balance by strengthening the jawline, correcting a receding chin and softening jowls.

COLLAGEN INDUCTION

Skin resurfacing using microneedling treatments like Dermapen to encourage collagen production remains a popular and effective option for smoothing neck creases and thickening fine, crepey skin, as are those that deliver small amounts of botulinum toxin and hyaluronic acid in the process.

FAT REMOVAL

Treating a double chin has become easier with options that target submental fullness, or the weight that hangs within the fat pad under the chin. Belkyra, a series of injections that persuade fat cells to give up their fat content, can deliver good results for the right candidates, while other experts rely upon fat freezing or cryolipolysis. However, results rely on using genuine devices – copycats in the market can limit results at best and run the risk of frostbite at worst.

THREAD LIFTS

The insertion of tiny facial threads to define and lift the face and sharpen the jawline is increasingly popular now they are smaller, dissolvable and safer. Yet there are risks – and not everyone is a good candidate – so remember to take reputable advice before considering.

SKIN TIGHTENING

Treatment using high-intensity focused ultrasound (sometimes called Ulfit) or radio frequency, to heat the tissue under the skin's surface. This triggers the natural production of collagen and elastin, resulting in lifted, firmer and tighter skin.

BOTULINUM TOXIN

While localised placement can help smooth some 'necklace lines' and creases, a Nefertiti Lift, named after the Egyptian queen with the famously lovely jawline, involves more extensive placement of botulinum toxin injections in the lower part of your face, jaw, and neck. It targets the platysma band of muscles that run vertically from the bottom of the face to your collarbone to create lift and minimise the appearance of sagging and jowls.

Slimming the face and jaw by relaxing an overactive masseter muscle with botulinum toxin is also an effective way to address a strong 'square'-looking jaw.

SMOOTHING SKINCARE

Calecim Professional Multi-Action Cream; Environ Body EssentiA Tri-Complex Contouring Cream; Dermalogica Neck Fit Contour Serum; Paula's Choice 1% Retinol Treatment.

