

# Wrinkles

**By Schuyler C. Metlis, M.D., F.A.C.S.**

Why do we get wrinkles? There are three major reasons, and many minor ones.

The bigger wrinkles, or folds, come because the tissues of the face become loose. As we age, the skin stretches, and the loose extra skin hangs down, usually accompanied by pads of fat that normally reside beneath the skin and help give shape to the face.

The most common location for these big wrinkles is the nasolabial folds, that is, the folds that run downward and outward from the bottom of the nose. As the skin and fat of the cheeks “falls” downward with age, they become more prominent.

Smaller wrinkles usually are also contributed to by the looseness of the face, but there are two other causes. As we age, the amount of time that our skin is exposed to the sun causes cumulative damage to the skin, causing it to lose its elasticity and stretch, with the excess helping to form wrinkles.

In addition, as we move our faces in the normal motions of facial expression, the repeated pulling of the face muscles on the skin tends to cause wrinkles, for example forehead lines or frown lines.

Weight loss can also contribute to the loosening of the facial skin, as well as leaving us with less fat under the skin to fill out what become new wrinkles.

What to do?

For the big wrinkles or folds, the only way to truly get rid of them, as opposed to partially camouflaging them, is to do a major tightening of the skin. That means surgery: a facelift, brow lift, eyelift, or mid-face lift, depending on the location of the loose skin.

Smaller wrinkles can be treated in three different ways, which may be combined.

There are multiple techniques that can tighten, to a limited extent, the skin of the face. Chemical peels, laser resurfacing, dermabrasion, microdermabrasion, and some skin care programs can help to accomplish this.

Then there is filling in the wrinkles. There are many different materials to accomplish this, all of which involve injections into or below the wrinkles to fill them out. Collagen and some other filler products can fill in the upper level of the

wrinkles. Hyaluronic acid products help provide bulk a little deeper to fill out the depressions. These products are all temporary in nature, and require re-treatment when the wrinkles start to recur, which can be from three to six months to a year. Some physicians inject fat. The results vary, but sometimes can be very successful.

Botox, or other forms of botulinum toxin can be used to temporarily paralyze the muscles that are pulling on the skin causing the wrinkles. This is often combined with filling out the wrinkles with one or more of the filler injection techniques.

No one has yet been able to explain to me how the expensive glop that you buy at a department store manages to get collagen through the skin surface specifically into the wrinkles, or for that matter, how it can incorporate into the skin, or tissues underneath it. I suppose that if it causes irritation that causes the skin to swell (fat people usually have fewer wrinkles) the wrinkles can be temporarily obliterated. That, however, does not seem to be what the commercials I see are telling me.

To find out if you would benefit from medical or surgical treatment of your wrinkles, call for an appointment.

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