

Hyaluronic acid natural born filler

IS HYALURONIC ACID THE MAGIC INGREDIENT FOR A DEWY AND YOUTHFUL-LOOKING SKIN? FOUND NATURALLY IN SKIN, JOINTS AND EYES, THIS IMPORTANT SUBSTANCE IS YOUR INBUILT SHOCK-ABSORBER. BY **IMOGEN MATTHEWS**



You know how fresh and plump your skin looks when you're young? That's partly down to hyaluronic acid (HA), a kind of natural sponge that attracts water and forms part of the skin's 'stuffing' (or extracellular matrix).

Then sometime in your thirties your skin starts losing its glow. But there are various ways you can replenish some essential HA: for loss of volume, dermal fillers give instant results and are suitable to fill deep wrinkles such as frown lines, crow's feet, nasolabial folds and marionette lines; and to enhance or subtly re-contour nose, lips and under eye area. To keep your skin well hydrated, HA is now included in plenty of skincare products.



Skin plumpers in a jar

Teosyal Covering Repair is ideal for use after skin treatments (£37.95, lifestyleaesthetics.com)



Restylane skincare uses NASHA (Non-Animal Stabilized Hyaluronic Acid) technology to improve the skin's water binding ability, keeping it soft and moist [price range: £24.95-£55, restylaneskincare.co.uk].



Before (left) and after Restylane hyaluronic acid anti-wrinkle injections



Dermal fillers

BEST FOR Injectable HA dermal fillers can restore lost volume on the face, hands and chest. Benefits usually last between six to 12 months depending on the type of filler and at what level it's injected. When used to enhance deeper layers such as the chin or cheeks it can last up to 18 months. Enhancement of areas prone to a lot of movement, such as lips, tends to last four to six months.

PROS Injectable HA dermal fillers have been shown to be safe. Restylane, Juvéderm and Teosyal are well-known brands. Unlike collagen injections that were popular in the nineties, allergies to HA are very rare as it is a material naturally found in the body. The results are instant: volumising takes place upon injection.

CONS There may be some temporary swelling and minor bruising following treatment. Side effects such as lumps and bumps or infections are rare in experienced hands so ask your practitioner how long they have been treating patients.

IS IT FOR ME? HA fillers are a good choice as a first cosmetic treatment as the effects are temporary. Consider a thorough pre-treatment consultation with an experienced practitioner to determine your suitability. HA fillers don't work so well on loose or saggy skin.

EXPERT COMMENT 'The beauty of hyaluronic acid as a cosmetic treatment is that the results can be carefully adjusted. It's best to start with a subtle enhancement which can be increased over time. Best of all, if a patient decides that she wants to reverse the change, unlike with permanent fillers an enzyme can be used to speed the resorption,' says plastic surgeon David Oliver.

Did You Know? Both cigarette smoke and zinc deficiency have been shown to reduce hyaluronic acid production

Did You Know? Some drugs and dietary supplements increase the chance of bruising so consult your practitioner

Drugs
Aspirin, Ibuprofen (such as Nurofen), Diclofenac (such as Voltarol), Warfarin

Supplements
Garlic, Ginseng, Ginkgo biloba, Glucosamine, Vitamin E, Fish oil

Hyaluronic acid creams

BEST FOR HA is used in many topical skincare products such as anti-ageing creams and moisturisers for its hydrating properties: it has been shown to hold up to 1,000 times its own weight in water.

PROS Cosmetic products containing HA can address skin dryness and hydration, especially when included with other humectants (water binding ingredients) such as glycerine. It is used in post-procedure skincare following injectables, laser treatments and peels.

CONS Topical HA cannot deliver the volumising results of an injectable, because the molecules are too large to penetrate across the skin's barrier.

IS IT FOR ME? If you have specific lines or loss of volume that you would like treated, see a practitioner. Otherwise for smoother, well-hydrated skin, consider some of the new skincare products using smaller molecular forms of HA that may penetrate into the upper layers of the epidermis, binding water and slowing down water loss.

EXPERT COMMENT 'Most creams containing hyaluronic acid sit on the surface of the skin and provide moisture and a silky feeling. By packaging the HA in microspheres there may be more penetration into the upper layers of the skin, but make sure you have sun protection as well,' says plastic surgeon Anita Hazari.

Need to know

Procedure: dermal HA filler injection
Anaesthesia: EMLA anaesthetic cream
Procedure time: 15 to 30 minutes
Recovery time: redness or swelling for one to two days
Side-effects: bruising, rarely skin reaction or lumpiness
Cost: from £200

Find an experienced practitioner at expertbeauty.com