



QUICKER picker uppers

By Richard Pierce

In the ever-growing world of cosmetic fixes, time is increasingly becoming a moot point.

What woman hasn't experienced an emergency like this one: You just found out you have a job interview/TV appearance/blind date/invitation to the social happening of the season. Your heart is racing. And then you glance in the mirror. Dear God. Frown lines. Puffy eyes. Pimples? It's all glaring back at you. And the big event's the day after tomorrow.

No worries, say the growing number of doctors who are offering quick fixes—with speedier results and significantly less downtime—for just about every little (or not so little) beauty emergency. New York's fairy godmother to the vain, dermatologist Pat Wexler, relies on botulinum B, commonly known by its trade name, Myobloc, to help make faces more camera-friendly on short notice. Its effects aren't as long-lasting as those achieved with botulinum A (Botox), but the results show much sooner. While Botox can take up to 10 days to kick in, Myobloc works its magic in 24 to 48 hours. "The neuromuscular junction where Myobloc binds is different than with

Botox, so it happens to work faster," says Wexler. Myobloc can also work for the small minority of women who have a resistance to Botox, and Wexler alternates between strains to help prevent potential resistance. Even Myobloc's biggest drawback-its shorter period of effectiveness-is not a significant one. "I've gotten it to last as long as 10 weeks," says Wexler. (Botox usually lasts 12 to 14 weeks.) "But 24 hours makes a big difference if you need it *now*."

Los Angeles plastic surgeon and dermatologist R. Patrick Abergel has designed another fairly noninvasive way to tighten and smooth out the smile-line area. He inserts a tiny (one-millimeter) V-shaped cannula-the instrument used in liposuction-into the nasolabial folds, gently cutting the adhesions that bind the skin and muscles together underneath. "Suddenly, the skin is totally free of the adhesions, and since the cannula is so tiny, it leaves the tiniest puncture and no scarring," he says. "Once you've done that, you can just leave it at that, because the body will create collagen tissue, which is permanent, and show improvement in those lines." The whole procedure, which requires only local anesthesia, takes no longer than 20 minutes, and patients can return to work the same day.

For brides, Wexler has found tricks to help enhance-or create-"that glow," one that has nothing to do with overwhelming joy. She applies what she's dubbed "the wedding peel," a wash of trichloroacetic acid, 24 hours before the processional, and skin (temporarily) tightens and glows. "It prevents acne-prone skin from breaking out," she says, "and it's also great for clearing skin up"-which could be a godsend given the stressful occasion. "If I do it the day before, the bride will photograph beautifully." Skin may experience some flaking four or five days later, but that seems a small price to pay for ensuring a good bridal portrait.

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Even the more invasive surgeries are being done in new ways that make scar ring minimal and stitches obsolete. New York plastic surgeon Robert Guida has been performing mini blepharoplasty for five years, which translates to a stitchless procedure that removes excess fat from the lower-eyelid area. The patient is lightly sedated while the doctor makes his incision inside the lower eyelid, then removes the excess fat with microsurgical instruments-tiny scissors and forceps. "No stitches are required, as the skin inside the eyelid heals quickly on its own," says Guida, who has seen patients out and about the next day with minimal bruising. "I did it to a model on a Thursday when he had a photo shoot the following Tuesday. If done properly, there is very little bruising and the results are immediate-you can see it in the recovery room."

Among the newest, and most innovative, procedures is New York plastic surgeon Helen Colon's "tummy tack." Using a tissue glue developed about five years ago to keep skin grafts in place, Colon essentially seals loose skin to the layer of tissue right beneath it. It's ideal for fit women in their late 40s or older who just need to address that extra bit of sagging skin without going for a full-scale tummy tuck. "I came upon this just thinking about how this glue would be perfect for the extra belly skin that can't be excised or lipo-ed away," says Colon. "It's the perfect solution." The doctor inserts a syringe filled with the glue, then presses the skin for a few minutes, literally pasting it down, to make sure it's attached to the underlying tissues. Colon has performed the procedure on only about 15 patients so far, most of whom are European or South American ("They're much more experimental," she says), but she sees the approach becoming huge. "Even the thinnest women have extra skin there, and there's been no way to get rid of it."

With these treatments available, coping with beauty crises is no longer a matter of sucking it up and holding your wrinkled forehead high. Now doctors and patients alike are redefining the term emergency. As Wexler says, laughing, "This office does not acknowledge collagen as an emergency appointment," but really, that's just not true." —JANE LARKWORTHY