

The lobe lift! They give away your age as much as your hands. But now there's a nip and tuck for earlobes, too

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While it's well known that the condition of a woman's hands and neck can reveal her true age, few people realise that the appearance of our earlobes is another telltale sign.

Like other parts of the body, they change because of the natural ageing process and constant exposure to the sun, especially since we routinely forget to apply sunscreen to our ears.

As collagen and elasticity decreases, earlobes often become elongated, saggy and thin, with fine wrinkling on the surface. Women who wear heavy earrings are particularly at risk because the weight of the jewellery inevitably pulls the ear downwards and causes the skin to become weaker and stretched.

Did you hear? Constantly exposed to the sun, earlobes hold the key signs to a woman's true age

Now a simple trimming procedure promises to permanently reverse the problem in less than an hour. The trend is gaining popularity in the U.S. and, as always, is set to cross the Atlantic

soon.

The 40-minute operation, called 'earlobe rejuvenation', costs around £1,100 for both ears and is carried out under local anaesthetic.

'We make the earlobes look plumper, more rounded and smaller, giving a more youthful image,' says Dr Matthew Schulman, assistant professor of plastic surgery at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City.

Most patients who go under his scalpel for earlobe rejuvenation are in their 50s and early 60s, although some are as young as 40. Most have used facial fillers such as Botox, or have undergone facelifts, but fear their earlobes betray their secret.

'It's a common issue which is easily addressed,' explains Dr Schulman, who began offering the procedure around 18 months ago. 'I tell people that, if they imagine their earlobe as a pizza, it's like taking out a slice and then putting the pizza back together again.'

Earlobe rejuvenation: The simple trimming procedure takes less than an hour

'It's similar to the technique we use to repair tears after an accident, when an earring gets caught in something.'

'I make an incision in a hidden area, close to where the ear connects to the side of the face, and remove a small amount of tissue and skin.'



'There are usually two internal stitches which dissolve, and ten on the outside ear which are left in place for a week.' Invisible surgical tape is applied instead of conspicuous-looking bandages.

Many patients have their ears re-pierced by Dr Schulman after three weeks and are able to wear their favourite earrings immediately. One woman who is delighted with the results is Eda Easton, 63, of New York, who hated her elongated earlobes.

'I blamed a combination of ageing and my fondness for long, heavy earrings,' says Mrs Easton, a retired marketing executive.

OUCH!

Throughout history, the earlobe has been the most popular piercing, with early examples seen on the Pharaoh Tutankhamun, who died in 1323BC

'I used to love pinning back my hair from my face - but my earlobes looked ugly. I've had Botox and realised that my ears didn't match up. They were making me look older.

'Having the surgery was the easiest thing I've done. It was less painful than trying on a pair of tight-fitting shoes, and it has given me and my earrings a new lease of life. I've recommended it to all of my friends.'

For younger women in their 30s and 40s, whose earlobes have only recently started to droop, Dr Schulman recommends using injectable fillers such as Restylane, Juvederm, Radiesse or Sculptra.

'If the lobes are of a generally good size, they will plump them up and add support,' he says. 'If the earring hole is slightly stretched, it will actually make the hole smaller.'

The injections, which cost between £440 and £620 for both ears, can also be done in your lunch hour.

'Fillers in the earlobe tend to last several months longer than in the face because there is no constant movement,' says Dr Schulman.

Another option for people with badly wrinkled or pigmented skin on their earlobes is a professional chemical peel, often combined with fractional laser treatment.

Three sessions are recommended at a cost of around £180 each.

