



Excess body fat can improve appearance--of hands

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By Alison McCook

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Good news for people struggling to lose those last stubborn ounces of body fat: a US plastic surgeon says that he can use that excess flab to restore a youthful appearance to your hands.

Talk about taking care of two problems at once.

In order to give people back the glow of youth to their hands, Dr. Sydney R. Coleman extracts fat from their own body and places multiple, miniscule deposits of the material underneath the skin of the hands.

Coleman, who is in private practice in New York, explained that the procedure--which costs approximately \$10,000 for both hands-- restores "fullness" into hands, smoothing out wrinkles and prominent blood vessels, and does not simply making hands fatter.

The procedure "creates the look of youth...without creating a fat hand," Coleman told Reuters Health.

Moreover, he said that he can inject the hands with body fat extracted from any region of the body. People with perfect bodies may not know the difference afterwards, Coleman noted, but for those with an extra patch of fat, he can remove a section and sculpt the remaining tissue to improve the appearance of that body region.

"Yes, their body will look better," he said.

In a recent issue of the journal Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Coleman describes the technique he uses during the surgery, and the experience of 7 middle-aged patients who underwent the procedure and were pleased with the results.

In an interview, Coleman explained that surgeons have attempted variations on the procedure he uses to inject fat under the skin of hands, but with limited success. Some of those procedures have involved one incision and the use of a sharp instrument to inject the fat.

However, the sharp instruments increased the risk of perforating veins or tendons, and one injection of fat often did not distribute itself in a way that gave hands a natural look of youthfulness, Coleman said.

In contrast, during his new technique, Coleman injects multiple doses of miniscule amounts of fat into 8 incisions in each hand using a blunt instrument that he created.

The surgeon said he creates support under aging skin by injecting a small amount--perhaps 1/100th of a teaspoon--of fat perhaps 300 times into each incision. This gradual process constructs a cell-by-cell scaffolding under the skin.

"It's like I'm wearing a cloth immediately under the skin--it's like support," Coleman described.

"There's every evidence that it's permanent, as living tissue can be," he added.

The skin of people in their late teens and early twenties gets its youthful glow as a result of substances in their young bodies which support their skin, Coleman noted.

However, as people age, that support deteriorates, he said, causing people to develop the wrinkles and prominent blood vessels that signify advanced years.

Transferring fat from one body region to another can also help improve the appearance of the face, Coleman noted.

He estimated that he currently performs the hand surgeries once per month. Coleman added that he presents his technique to doctors around the world, and other surgeons also offer the same procedure.

SOURCE: Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery 2003;110:1731-1744.

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