

# the Sunday times

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## Pick your fix

### FOR THE FACE:

#### Fillers and Botox (left)

These "shape" the face. Botox smoothens out wrinkles and frown furrows, but people with square jaws can get it injected to relax muscles in this area, softening that square look. Botox also stops excessive sweating in areas such as the armpits. Fillers even out and plump up folding flesh. Areas where they work their magic include eyebags, frown lines, droopy nose bridges and lips, and saggy cheeks. A procedure usually takes less than 30 minutes.



#### Ulthera

Ultrasound waves are used to firm, tighten and lift sagging skin. An applicator delivers pulses of ultrasound

waves on the skin surface. These penetrate deeper tissues where the heat produced causes collagen – a protein responsible for the texture, shape, elasticity and suppleness of the skin – to contract, and also stimulate its growth. Introduced in 2009, this procedure takes 40 minutes at most.

### FOR THE BODY:

**Cool-sculpting (left)** A non-invasive method targeting fat loss, the procedure uses a machine that freezes fat cells, which are then shed by the body naturally over the next six months. The hour-long procedure claims to get rid of an average of 20 per cent of fat from the treatment area. Results can be seen in three weeks.

## Procedures lose stigma

Dr Joseph Yang tours a "3-D liquid facelift" – a minimally invasive, no-downtime procedure that uses fillers to enhance the nasal bridge, nose tip, cheekbones and chin. "There's no blood, no surgery, hardly any pain and the result is instantaneous. People would rather spend money on their face than on a bag or a pair of shoes," he said, adding that these facelifts are so popular he does an average of three a day. And compared to surgical procedures, it will not cost you a pretty penny. A full quick-fix facelift is \$3,000 at the most, compared to a surgical nose job which would set you back between \$10,000 and \$15,000, Dr Yang said. Another non-surgical treatment, called Ulthera, uses ultrasound technology to tighten skin and slim the face. A 40-minute session costs about \$2,800 and the effects can last up to a year. Aesthetic doctor David Loh, who runs his own practice, said that the fact that the younger set are embracing these cosmetic quick-fixes is a sure sign that such procedures are fast losing their stigma. He added: "This reflects a significant mindset change that it's now become quite hip and cool to just pick up a Starbucks and swing by the doctor's. It's no longer taboo." Others say that the popularity of South Korean pop culture – which endorses cosmetic quick-fixes – has also played a part in un-

king the stigma. It helps that with an increase in the availability of such procedures, prices have also become more competitive.

One 29-year-old patient, who asked to be known as only Michelle, told *SundayLife* that unhappy with her squarish jaw and flat nose, she decided to give cosmetic quick-fixes a shot before considering the real deal.

Injecting Botox to the jaw area relaxed the muscles and created a more almond-shaped face, while a filler to the nose created a higher nose bridge. The effect lasts at least six months.

Dr Calvin Chan, medical director of Calvin Chan Aesthetic & Laser Clinic, said more patients are also opting for these quick-fixes because of their busy work and social schedules.

He added: "Society's aesthetic is also moving towards a more natural-looking beauty, so many individuals now want treatments that give a subtle, natural-looking improvement – a better-looking you rather than a dramatic change – which these non-invasive treatments deliver best."

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## Nip and tuck during lunch

Cosmetic quick-fixes are becoming a norm and more people are going for procedures which take less than an hour

A 34-year-old lawyer, Y. Lim noticed fine lines around her eyes, and sagging skin on her cheeks had begun to sag. Wanting to rejuvenate her look but preferring to avoid the knife, she popped into a doctor's office during lunch and got a quick-fix – in less than half an hour.

Plastic surgeon Tan Ying Chien from The Sloane Clinic injected fillers of hyaluronic acid – a naturally occurring substance in skin – into her cheeks to pump them up and create a youthful, apple-cheeked look. He injected fillers into a crease between her lower eyelid and the side of the nose to

plump the area – saggy skin there makes a person look haggard. Dr Tan also gave her Botox jabs to the outer corners of her eyes to smoothen creases. So instead of pain and the long-drawn-out recovery period that plastic surgery involves, Ms Lim shaved a few years off her face in one lunch hour.

She was also sent straight back to the office with her colleagues none the wiser. "Some of my friends have commented that I look fresher, but so far no one has asked me if I've got anything done," she said. The cost was between \$1,500 and \$3,000, which is a steal of a peel compared to a cheek lift which would easily cost \$12,000.

For many women like Ms Lim, getting a beauty boost just involves swooping that nighttime gym session for a "workout" at the doc's. Treatments that take less than an hour include fillers, Botox injections, chemical peels, hair removal and fat reduction.

Indeed, with more sophisticated procedures, affordable prices and short recovery times, doctors are experiencing a boom in the number of patients who see them for cosmetic quick-fixes. The Sloane Clinic's Dr Tan, who has more than 10 years' experience, said that he has seen a "very significant" increase of between 30 and 40 per cent annually over the past five years in patient numbers.

And they are getting younger too. It used to be that the women who came for Botox and fillers were middle-aged tail-fals trying to recapture their youth. Not anymore. More patients in their 20s and 30s are coming in for treatments that allow them to contour and enhance their features without having a scalpel touch their face.

Anti-ageing physician Caroline Low added: "Some come here with their first paycheck. They feel they must look good if they want to stay on top of their game or get that top job."



Kimberly Spykerman

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