

# SAVING FACE

Knock years off yourself - without that Botox freeze-dried effect



**“My friend resembled herself from ten years ago - like Dorian Gray, but in a good way”**

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: I don't like Botox. It's not an ideological objection; I just don't find frozen foreheads attractive. An entirely wrinkle-free face is unnatural, not to say spooky: people are not supposed to look like shop mannequins.

There is, however, one injectable treatment that does seem to work: Sculptra. The name would suit a James Bond villain and so, in some respects, would the product. It is crystallised poly-L-lactic acid which, after reconstitution with salt water, is injected deep into the tissue of the face. It works by stimulating the production of new collagen – which in turn plumps up the face and, yes, smooths out wrinkles. The results last anything up to three years.

Lactic acid is something the body produces naturally. In children and young people, it is plentiful; as we grow older we produce less of the stuff, which in turn contributes to a deterioration in muscle and skin tone.

What happens when you have Sculptra is this: the skin of the face is cleaned, and a local skin anaesthetic applied. The needle is then plunged quickly in and out of the face, at various key points. It doesn't hurt (says my close and reliable friend), but it is quite unpleasant. As she said through watery eyes, it's one of those things that you get halfway through and think: what on earth am I doing to myself?

It is vitally important to use a well-qualified surgeon, since the facial nerve fans out across the cheeks and if you hit that, you're in serious trouble. The whole process takes probably no more than 15 minutes, but by the end you've had quite enough. Afterwards, the face is vigorously massaged to aid absorption of the solution and then, as the brochures say, you are free to go.

What of the results? Impressive, that's what. The beauty of Sculptra is that it's very gradual. At first, the face just looks slightly plumper and a bit swollen. This persists for roughly 24 hours. Then, slowly but gradually – rather like the ageing process itself, in fact, but in reverse – you begin to notice a change. It's subtle, really subtle. The full effect takes a few months to emerge, at the end of which my friend uncannily resembled herself from ten years ago – like Dorian Gray, but in a good way. The slight droop at the jaw had gone; the bags under the eyes had evaporated; her skin tone was more even and her pores less visible. Now she looks as though she's had a long, relaxing holiday. She does not look like she's had “work”. And she certainly doesn't look like a shop dummy.

For more information, contact the London Medical & Aesthetic Clinic (020-8342 1100; [www.lmaclinic.com](http://www.lmaclinic.com))