

**What is filler dissolving?**

If you have had filler treatments and are no longer happy with how they look. Or you have lumps, nodules or migration from previous filler treatments, or you're experiencing a filler-related complication, you may wish to (or be advised to) dissolve your filler. This can be done using an enzyme called hyaluronidase, or Hyalase®, which is a prescription-only medicine. It has an off-license use in aesthetic medicine. It is injected where the hyaluronic acid filler has been placed and dissolves it. This only works for hyaluronic acid-based fillers.

**How do filler dissolving treatments work?**

Most dermal fillers used in the UK contain hyaluronic acid. When injected into the skin, hyaluronic acid's hydrophilic (water-loving) tendencies, cause it to attract water, instantly filling out wrinkles and scars and adding volume, shape and definition where necessary. Hyaluronic acid-based fillers can be dissolved using an enzyme called hyaluronidase. This is a prescription-only medicine that comes in liquid form. It is injected into the area filler has been placed, dissolving any filler in that area quickly.

**Who can have filler dissolving treatments?**

Filler dissolving is suitable for all adults who have had hyaluronic acid treatments.

**Who is not suitable for filler dissolving treatments?**

You may not be suitable for filler dissolving if you have a known allergy to hyaluronidase or, in some cases, an allergy to bee or wasp stings. Your practitioner will assess you for any sensitivity/allergy to hyaluronidase prior to treatment.

**How do you prepare for a filler dissolving treatment?**

In the week before the treatment, avoid taking aspirin (unless prescribed by a doctor), ibuprofen, vitamin E and C, and fish oil supplements. These may increase bleeding and bruising. You can take paracetamol. You must inform your practitioner of any prescription medication you are taking. Avoid any injectable treatments 48 hours before or 48 hours after filler dissolving treatments.

**What happens during a filler dissolving treatment?**

Where filler is being dissolved for cosmetic reasons (i.e. migration, poor aesthetic outcome, nodules), at least 20 minutes prior to your treatments, your practitioner will test you for any allergy/sensitivity to hyaluronidase. This is done by injecting a small amount of the medicine into your forearm and monitoring for signs of reaction (e.g. hives or wheals). If there are no adverse reactions, your practitioner will begin the treatment to dissolve the hyaluronidase.

In the case of an emergency situation (i.e. the possibility of a vascular occlusion or impending necrosis) the skin patch test may not be undertaken. Your skin will be cleaned of any makeup and an antibacterial/alcohol wipe will be used to sterilise the area. The area to be treated will then be numbed with an anaesthetic cream or anaesthetic injections will be administered. Your practitioner will markup the area where the hyalase needs to be placed and will use a micro-needle or cannula to inject small amounts of hyaluronidase to dissolve the filler. Your practitioner will then manipulate and massage the area to ensure that the hyaluronidase is distributed and able to dissolve all the filler.

Filler dissolving treatments are likely to feel uncomfortable, but should not be unbearable. Results should be seen immediately, although some fillers are harder to dissolve than others, so additional sessions may be required. You will be expected to remain in the clinic, under the care of your practitioner for an hour following the administration of the hyaluronidase.

Following your treatment, your practitioner will ask you to return for a follow up appointment, to ensure the treatment has gone according to plan. An additional treatment may be required.

**What happens after a filler dissolving treatment?**

After your treatment, you can go about your normal day. Bruising and swelling is common post-treatment, but these effects are temporary.

Post-treatment advice includes:



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- iced water soaks or ice packs to help to reduce swelling (although this is generally not required);
- the use of painkillers such as paracetamol, is often not required but may be used if needed for a few days after treatment;
- arnica (a homeopathic remedy) cream or tablets are sometimes recommended a few days before and a few days after treatment as there is some evidence that this can reduce bruising.

Bruising and swelling should go down after a couple of days but can persist for a week. If you continue to experience excessive swelling, itching, pain, inflammation or skin colour changes, you should contact your practitioner immediately.

### **What are the side effects and risks of dissolving fillers?**

Depending on the area being injected, the type of filler being used and the pain relief method being used, clients may find this procedure relatively painless to uncomfortable. Treatments around the nose, lips and tear trough area (under the eyes) are usually more painful than other areas but most clients find filler dissolving treatments as bearable as the initial filler treatment. You must discuss pain management options with your practitioner and let them know if you are finding the procedure too uncomfortable.

The obvious, immediate and most common side effect is slight bleeding after the needle has been inserted into the skin. Other risks include bruising, tenderness, redness and swelling around the injection site. These signs may take 2-7 days to resolve completely, especially around the lips where there is little flesh and skin is tender. Hyalase (hyaluronidase) breaks down hyaluronic acid fillers, but it can also break down naturally occurring hyaluronic acid present in the body, so the results can be unpredictable and the effect dramatic.

There may well be loss of volume and some skin laxity which in itself may not provide a good aesthetic result. This often corrects itself as your own hyaluronic acid is regenerated 2-3 months later.

Rarely, allergic type reactions can occur after a filler dissolving treatment. In very rare cases, these can be severe or even fatal if not quickly and adequately treated. Signs of an allergic reaction include prolonged redness, swelling, itching and/or hardness, bumps in the skin. Such signs may appear at some or all injection points or in the general area the hyaluronidase has been injected. If you have allergic-type reactions to bee and wasp stings, you are more likely to have a reaction to hyaluronidase. If you experience difficulty breathing, it is indicative of an anaphylactic reaction and you should seek medical help immediately.

As with any skin treatment, injections should be avoided in areas where the skin is swollen or where infections are present - e.g. active acne. Medically-qualified practitioners will be able to advise on treatments to manage such conditions prior to any filler dissolving treatments. If you have a history of cold sores, or fever blisters in the treated area, injections may result in break outs. In this case, your practitioner may recommend that you take a course of anti-viral medicine before treatment.

No medical practitioner would carry out a filler dissolve treatment on a pregnant woman.

You should wait at least 2 weeks before undergoing any new dermal filler treatments. This is to ensure that any swelling and bruising has subsided. Also, if you have treatments too soon, hyaluronidase will dissolve your new filler too.

### **What are the alternatives to filler dissolving treatments?**

That depends on whether the reason for dissolving is cosmetic or medical. Where there is no medical need, the alternative is to not dissolve. Where there is a medical need, dissolving is the only option.

