

What are dermal fillers?

Dermal fillers are gel-like substances containing hyaluronic acid, which is a naturally occurring substance found in the body. Injectable filler contains water, hyaluronic acid, sometimes lidocaine anaesthetic, and stabilising molecules.

What are fillers used for?

Dermal fillers are injected into the face to restore volume, correct wrinkles, contour facial features or enhance features like lips. Your practitioner will discuss which treatment options are best for you, providing you with alternatives, where necessary, including the option for no treatment.

How are fillers administered?

Fillers are strategically injected using a variety of techniques, depending on the area of the face, the anatomy of the patient and the desired outcome. The area to be treated is first numbed with topical anaesthetic or a dental block is injected. Your practitioner will then use a micro-needle or cannula to inject small quantities of filler into the area being treated. The treated areas may then be massaged or manipulated to ensure the filler is evenly and correctly placed.

How do fillers work?

Fillers are gel-like in consistency, so they instantly fill, plump and add volume to the areas they have been injected.

How long does filler last?

This depends on where the filler is placed, the type and amount of filler used and various lifestyle factors, like sun exposure, smoking and drinking.

As a rough guide:

- Lip fillers typically last 6-12 months
- Jaw line and liquid rhinoplasty treatments last 12-18 months
- Tear trough treatments last 12-24 months

Your practitioner will discuss the longevity of your particular treatment with you during your consultation.

Who can have fillers?

You are a suitable candidate for dermal fillers if you are an adult and the concerns you have about your appearance have a significant psychological impact on you, you have no medical contraindications and your practitioner has deemed you a good candidate for treatment.

Who is not suitable for filler treatments?

You are not a suitable candidate for dermal fillers if you:

- are under the age of 18
- are breastfeeding or pregnant
- are allergic to hyaluronic acid or any of the ingredients in the filler product

Your practitioner will assess your medical history form and determine whether you're a suitable candidate for treatment.

What are the risks and side effects of filler treatments?

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 2-3 days to vanish completely, especially around the lips.

Occasionally, a 'bleb' will occur. This is where the filler has been injected too superficially (close to the surface) and will need to be dissolved.



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Rarely, allergic type reactions can occur after a filler treatment. These include prolonged redness, swelling, itching and/or hardness and bumps in the skin. Such signs may appear at some or all injection points. Sometimes, they can last several months or longer, but this is extremely unusual.

Occasionally, bacterial, viral or fungal infections can occur following dermal filler treatments. Infections can cause redness and swelling and resolve or progress into abscesses or biofilms which can a while to resolve. Rarely infections occur months later as 'biofilm reactions'. These problems may resolve in time, but medical intervention may be required in some cases, and long-term effects may persist in rare cases.

Another rare side effect is occlusions. This is where filler is accidentally injected into a blood vessel, creating a blockage. This presents as whitening of the skin, followed by the area turning greyish-purple. If left untreated, this can result in tissue loss in the affected area, which can result in permanent scarring. There have been reports of this in lip and nose treatments. One particular type of occlusion is an ocular occlusion. This is where a blood vessel supplying the eye gets blocked. This results in partial or complete blindness.

If you exhibit any symptoms of occlusion, you need to seek the advice of your practitioner immediately. You will need to be prescribed emergency treatment medicines, which is why it is important that you have access to a practitioner who is able to prescribe medicine.

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. If you have a history of cold sores, or fever blisters in the treated area, filler injections may result in break outs. In this case, your practitioner may recommend that you take a course of anti-viral medicine before treatment.

If you have a known allergy to hyaluronic fillers or any of the ingredients in the filler product, you must inform your practitioner. An alternative treatment will need to be carried out. If you have a known allergy to bee or wasp stings, you may be allergic to the medication that is used to dissolve hyaluronic acid fillers - hyaluronidase. Your practitioner will discuss this with you during your consultation.

What should I do following dermal filler treatments?

After dermal filler treatment,

- Avoid extreme facial expressions, don't touch the area or apply makeup for at least 6 hours
- Avoid exposure to direct sunlight, UV, extreme heat i.e. sauna, steam rooms, sun beds etc, as this may increase discomfort and swelling
- Avoid extreme cold; this includes ice packs that are directly applied to the skin. If necessary, you can apply a cool compress to the area, to reduce any discomfort or swelling.
- Arnica tablets/gels can be used to help reduce bruising or the application of vitamin K oxide cream.
- If you have had a local nerve infiltration injection, particularly for lip filler treatments, please do not consume any hot or cold drinks until your sensation has returned to normal.

Bruising and swollen should settle after a few days, but can persist for a week.

What should I do if I suffer side effects?

Report any symptoms to your practitioner as soon as you experience them. They will be best placed to provide you with aftercare and advice.

- If you continue to experience excessive swelling, pain, skin colour changes or if any blistering occurs, you should contact your practitioner immediately.
- Similarly, if you experience any delayed reactions such as lumpy redness occurring any time after treatment, you should contact your practitioner.

What are alternatives to dermal filler treatments?

There are many alternatives to dermal filler treatments, depending on your particular aesthetic concerns and reasons for seeking treatment.

Alternatives include, but are not limited to, microneedling, skin boosters/bioremodellers, thread lifts, device-based skin tightening (e.g. HIFU, RF, IPL), laser resurfacing, cosmetic surgery or no treatment. Your practitioner will be able to discuss alternative treatments with you during your consultation.



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