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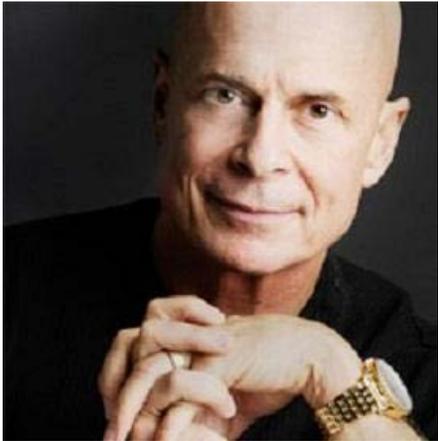
## COSMETIC TOWN JOURNAL

### Lip Lift

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A lip lift is a procedure that reduces the length of the lip. The columella, which is the area under the nose to the end of the red part of the lip, lengthens on some people as they age.

When resting female and male patients (especially female) have their mouth half open while not smiling, other people should be able to see a couple of millimeters of their incisor teeth. When they smile, others should see a couple of millimeters of their gum tissue. (It is a little bit less obvious on males.) Some people have a lip that is very long and no teeth are visible when they are at rest and it looks like they have a denture or denture's smile. This can be caused by the fact that their upper jaw has not grown down far enough. It could also be because they have short teeth. Whatever the reason, patients who desire a lip lift have a long upper lip and want to shorten it.



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### LIP LIFT PROCEDURE

The doctor makes the lip shorter in order to show more teeth. That is mainly what people want from the procedure. They complain that people do not see any teeth when they talk. It is called a bullhorn procedure because the geometry of the skin incision looks like a set of horns on a bull. It also looks like a handlebar mustache. The lip lift excises a strip of skin under the nose. When the edges are put back together, it actually rolls the upper lip out more and gives a fuller, plumper lip that shows more of the vermilion or the pink part of the lip.

### REJUVENATION

A lip lift is a procedure to shorten an abnormally long upper lip in order to enhance the smile aesthetics and the dental aesthetics. It rejuvenates the lip area because it enhances the lip and gives a firmer, plumper lip. It is rejuvenation in the sense that a facelift is rejuvenation.

### IDEAL PATIENTS

The most ideal patients are patients that have a normal dental relationship but have an excessively long upper lip.

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It also helps with aging correction. As people age, their lip gets longer and a lot of changes happen in the perioral region. There is atrophy of the muscle, the mucosa, the salivary glands, and changes in the bone. In many respects, a lip lift is an anti-aging procedure because people start out with a shorter lip and a number of them will end up with a long lip which needs to be reduced to rejuvenate that area.

## CORNER LIP LIFT

A corner lip lift is called a grin lift or a smile lift. Again, as people age, they lose tooth structure. They have bony changes and the corner of their mouth sort of folds in and turns down and becomes a firmer frown.

The lower grin lift procedure takes a little triangle of tissue out from the corner of the lips and turns it upwards. Some patients are over treated and look like they have a silly grin on their face all the time. It is not designed to give the patient a smile but it does have that effect. It is designed to take away some of the excess overlap in the corner of the mouth.

## LIP REDUCTION

Not everybody wants larger lips. Many patients want lip reduction and these are primarily ethnic patients. They are usually African American and want smaller lips. This is known as an eclipse lip lift. Some patients have hereditarily and racially larger lips so the surgeon takes a strip out of the center of the lip and removes some of the deeper tissue to reduce the size of the lip.

People with really big lips show a tremendous amount of the pink portion of their lip. A lip reduction retracts the lips and pulls them in. It is the opposite effect of fillers when the lips are injected to reveal more of the pink. In this case, the patient is trying to see less pink.

## LIP IMPLANTS

Another procedure is lip implants. They were popular at one time but there has been a huge paradigm shift in the last few years with fillers. Even 15 or 20 years ago, doctors only had collagen and it was not a great filler. There were a lot of allergy problems and it did not last long. Today, the new fillers are not allergic and they come from non-animal sources. Doctors can reverse them if patients do not like the results and they last a lot longer.

The average patient that comes in for something for the lips is probably a filler patient. Most people that need lip filler want some plumping. They want outline. They want the corners of their mouth turned up and they want their smoker's lines or lipstick lines improved.

Young people have full, voluptuous, curved, and short lips. Older people have long, flat lips that are devoid of pout and volume and they get lipstick lines and downturned corners of the mouth. Contemporary surgeons have a bag of tricks including nonsurgical and surgical techniques and also Botox for the lipstick lines. Botox is used to turn up the corners of the mouth by treating the depressor anguli oris muscle (the DAO). Botox in the chin relaxes the lower lip in the mentalis muscle.

## LIMITATIONS OF FILLERS



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### Lip Reduction



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### Lip Lift



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There are certain people that need a lip lift. Anyone over the age of 60 could use a facelift but not every patient is a candidate for a brow lift. It is a similar case with the lip lift. Doctors can do just about anything with fillers but they cannot make the lip shorter. That is a limitation with fillers.

## RISKS

Lip lifts are misunderstood because a lot of people are candidates for lip lift. For example, some people have a gummy smile and they show a lot of teeth and a lot of gum already. If a lip lift was done on that patient, they would look like Bugs Bunny. All a person would see is teeth. It is important to know when to do a lip lift and when not to do it. Patients have to be careful to choose a procedure that will help them rather than harm them.

Some people do a lot of work on the underlying muscle when they do a lip lift. This can lead to abnormal animation in function because of too much aggressive surgery in that area. The biggest problem is that the scar can be visible. If it is visible, laser resurfacing needs to be performed on it. Also, there will probably be some temporary tingling and numbness.

## SCARS

How the incision is designed is extremely important. It has to be right between the nostrils and the upper lip because if it is higher or lower, it will be noticeable. In that area, it does not scar gracefully on some people. If the scar is not the way the patient wants it, the doctor can go back and laser it.

## RECOVERY

A lip lift is not a particularly painful procedure. If an average patient has it done on a Friday, the stitches would be in for about a week. Many people go back to work 3 or 4 days later with their flesh-colored sutures. A patient does not need to take more than a week off.

Patients need to be careful with their oral function. They do not want to engage in a lot of laughing, pulling on their lip, or sucking through a straw.

## RESULTS

The results are pretty permanent because the average patient doing this is in their 40s or 50s. It took them 40 or 50 years to get into this condition unless they were born with it.

Patients can come back to their doctor for a touch-up procedure. The biggest thing with any cosmetic procedure is to be conservative and careful. There are many young patients that request procedures they do not need. They come in and think they have a long lip and want to take 10mm off. The doctor really needs to be conservative.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Lip implants were popular 10 or 15 years ago. They are still made but the resurgence in fillers means doctors do not do them that often. Patients can usually feel the implant even though it looks pretty natural. A lip lift is not something that everybody can undergo. It all comes down to the consultation and choosing the right approach for the specific patient.

Written by Cosmetic Town Editorial Team- MA

Based on an exclusive interview with Joe Niamtu, MD in Midlothian, VA

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