

STEADY GAINS

Collagen banking is beauty's latest buzz phrase. Rather than delivering instant results, the strategy requires a good deal of patience and planning. The reward for those who stick with it? Better skin for the future.

By EMILY MACCULLOCH

IF YOU THINK OF your skin as an investment—a “skinvestment,” if you will—collagen, then, is your capital. It's the thing you want to grow over time in order to have a cushion (quite literally, in this case) that'll help you better face (again, quite literally) whatever lies ahead.

It's called “collagen banking,” and it seems to be everywhere in skincare lately, from treatments promising to rev up your own production of the protein to salves vowing to help build reserves of it. The idea? Turn to them now and cash in on a plumper, more cushiony visage down the road.

“Think of it as front-loading your skin so that you age less drastically later,” explains Annie Lorefice, senior aesthetic nurse at Clinique Le 1620's downtown Montreal and Royalmount locations. She notes that these days, many patients inquire about collagen banking, but even for those who don't, she and her team make it their goal to educate them on the importance of investing in their collagen stocks.

A little refresher on collagen: “Collagen is a protein that forms the skin's natural scaffolding,” explains

Dr. Nazli Ghiasi, a board-certified dermatologist and the owner of MapleDerm in Toronto. “It's the structural framework that gives skin its strength, firmness and elasticity.” In other words, it's what keeps everything lifted and smooth—until it starts to disappear.

“After the age of 25, collagen starts to deplete in our bodies at a rate of approximately 1 percent every year,” says Lorefice. “While this decline happens naturally as we age, it's accelerated by UV rays, cigarette smoke and poor nutrition, and it even has a genetic component.” The amino-acid-rich protein comes in many forms (28, to be exact), but the two most closely tied to skin aging are types I and III. “Type I collagen is like a pillar that gives skin its strength and firmness, while type III collagen is responsible for skin's flexibility and acts like springs to keep the skin bouncy,” notes Ghiasi.

For years, it was the norm to wait until telltale signs of aging—forehead lines, crow's feet, a slackening of the skin along the jawline—appeared before booking in for a cosmetic treatment, but that has changed. “Patients often ask me how to be

more proactive and prevent aging rather than reverse it,” says Ghiasi. “Attitudes have shifted drastically toward prevention, and that's precisely referring to collagen banking.”

That shift resonated with Romy, a 37-year-old from Montreal who decided to get some Sculptra, a.k.a. biostimulator injections, ahead of her last birthday. (The treatment can cost between \$800 and \$1,400 per vial. She got two.) “As I was approaching my 40s, I wanted to do something to sort of preserve my skin's youthfulness—something that would yield long-term results,” she explains. “I did some research and found out about how Sculptra can boost your own collagen. That really spoke to me. It's kind of like how I've moved away from fast fashion in recent years and am being more mindful about investing in things that will last longer.”

Most patients used to seek out cosmetic tweaks to modify their appearance or enhance specific features. Who could forget the lip-filler boom brought on by Kylie Jenner's confession to plumping her pout in 2015? But as “filler face” has increasingly gotten a bad rap and >

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many celebrities have spoken publicly about dissolving their fillers, a more global, undetectable approach has been gaining traction. “I tried a little filler here and there in my mid-20s, and I felt like it really changed my appearance—like, not in a good way,” says Romy. “Even though I only did it a few times, when I look at photos, I find it just looks weird. Like the places that were augmented stick out too much. Now I’m much more focused on my skin’s overall health and quality.”

Biostimulators, like Sculptra, are but one of the ways you can safeguard your collagen and build on it too. As with any smart investment plan, the best approach is a diversified one. “There’s never an age that’s too young to preserve your collagen,” says Ghiasi. “The first and most important step is practising good sun protection.” Wearing a broad-spectrum SPF 30-plus daily, 365 days a year, is the least expensive and least invasive way to go about it. She also points to lifestyle factors, such as a diet rich in antioxidants, regular exercise, good sleep habits, minimal alcohol consumption and abstinence from smoking. (As for oral collagen supplements, the jury is still out on whether they are truly helpful in increasing the body’s deposits of the protein in the skin.)

When it comes to your skincare regimen, Ghiasi recommends crafting a lineup that will increase collagen production and protect against oxidative stress, which is one of the main culprits behind degradation.

A vitamin C serum in the morning and a good retinol at night are the basics to start with, while actives like peptides and niacinamide can be folded in for further benefits.

For those wanting to take things up another notch, Lorefice suggests non-invasive treatments that trigger controlled regeneration. A good start includes “IPL [intense pulsed light], a gentle light-based treatment, and advanced facials combining micro-needling, platelet-rich plasma or fibrin [PRP/PRF], exosomes and LED therapy, depending on [a person’s] skin type and goals,” she says.

Once you hit your 30s and your natural collagen levels further dwindle, energy-based devices can make a big impact. “Radio-frequency microneedling treatments, ideally paired with PRP for an extra regenerative boost, will kick collagen production into high gear,” she adds. Hybrid fractional and CO₂ lasers are other powerhouse options that target hyperpigmentation and skin texture while also performing deep dermal remodelling.

And then there are injectables—a trend that’s currently skyrocketing. Over the past year, Ghiasi has seen a notable shift toward biostimulatory fillers (like Sculptra and Radiesse), which stimulate the body’s collagen production over the course of a few months rather than instantly replacing lost volume. “Patients are increasingly interested in treatments that work with their own biology,” she says. The appeal? Biostimulators can offer more inconspicuous, gradual results

compared to traditional hyaluronic-acid fillers, and they often align closely with longevity-driven skin goals. She adds that the demand for this type of treatment has grown significantly in her clinic. “Upwards of 70 percent of our monthly filler injections in 2025 were biostimulatory.”

Within three months of getting Sculptra, Romy noticed her face looking bouncier and smoother. “If I was stippling on foundation with a brush, for example, I could see my skin sort of springing back, the way a bouncy castle would if you were jumping on it. It was super subtle, but it just gave me a more youthful appearance without changing what I look like.” She’s considering making the injections her yearly birthday gift to herself, much the same way she puts money into an RRSP every February.

Because, ultimately, the earlier you start caring for your collagen, the more youthful dividends you’ll collect later. While your savings grow in the bank, your skin’s youth capital is compounding in another, and that’s one investment your future face will surely thank you for. ■

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