Nurture your hands and neck

No more tell-tale ageing signs

By Dr Patrina Wong

Many of us who have turned 40 want to believe that life indeed begins at 40. It would be wonderful to have a body and skin to match, as appearance is a dead giveaway of our age.

Today, we are very fortunate that the advancements in medical aesthetics can cater to our desire to preserve our youth and enhance our looks, giving us the confidence boost in our daily lives. As a practitioner in medical aesthetics, I am often asked if it is possible to prevent, slow down or even reverse ageing and what the non-invasive measures are to rejuvenate the body and skin.

What the hands and neck reveal

Many of us are well aware of the risks of sun damage to our face but we often neglect our hands, neck and chest. It is understandable that investments are made to the face, as it is the first visual point plus volume loss associated to ageing is mostly manifested on the face. However, the neck and hands are also frequently exposed to sunlight and exhibit tell-tale signs which reveal our real age.

We do need to recognise that the neck is a continuation of the face. When the skin texture of the neck is similar to the face, it provides a pleasing, uniform appearance. When the discrepancy increases, the true age of the person will be more noticeable.

The second area that shows volume loss is the hands. When we meet a business associate or a new acquaintance, it is common to shake his or her hand and inevitably, the hand becomes an extension of our appearance and adds to the impression we give.

As we age, we will notice two aspects of changes to our skin. The first is skin texture – pigmentation changes, skin thickness, and surface appearance (fine lines). The second is a generalised volume loss, which results in more visible and prominent veins and tendons, as well as a more "bony" appearance, especially of the hands.

To understand how to forestall this ageing process, perhaps it is easier to view ageing as a youth deficiency disorder. Restoring skin youthfulness, then, is simply about texture and volume.

Home care: having a robust skincare regime

Extend the skincare beyond your face to the neck and hands. Seek out customised solutions with the right ingredients and concentrations to suit the respective areas of face, neck and hands.

Here's a basic but effective regime you can follow:

- As simplistic as it sounds, cleansing is a vital first step in anti-ageing skin care, as it removes dirt, oil, and makeup that clogs the pores and causes blemishes.
- Exfoliating helps to remove dead skin cells, reveal fresh skin and prepare for the absorption of creams and moisture. In choosing an exfoliant for daily use, get one that is gentle on your skin.
- Invest in a good toner to freshen and tone the skin.
- Replenish the skin's vital nutrients and moisture with a moisturiser and sunscreen.

Apart from maintenance and prevention, use specially prescribed creams to address specific needs such as age spots, and severe dryness disproportionate to chronological age. Apply the creams in an upward and outward motion; dragging down on the skin will only beget more lines, wrinkles and problems for the face and neck.

Medical aesthetics: choosing an effective solution

Here's a range of treatments targeting different needs:

FOR THE HANDS:

- A combination of fruit peels and Intense Pulsed Light Therapy (IPL) can improve sun damage and age spots. The peels accelerate exfoliation by regenerating new skin, resulting in hands that are more uniform in colour, smoother and with less wrinkles. The IPL reduces the appearance of age spots by breaking up and dispersing the pigment. Overall result is a more youthful appearance.
- To further enhance the texture and improve the smoothness, the medical Yag laser is recommended. This involves the application of a laser light on the skin on the back of the hands to stimulate collagen growth.
- To plump up bony-looking hands, hyaluronic acid treatments are employed to allow moisturising ingredients to plump up the skin from within and encourage the formation of new collagen.
- LinC Medi-Therapeutics, a favourite with our clients for its effectiveness, utilises electroporation to allow vitamins and hyaluronic acid to rejuvenate the skin by providing more radiance and glow.

Rejuvenation of the hands is only successful if a holistic approach is adopted. Hence, diseases and deficiencies should be addressed first. The backs of the hands may look great but the appearance can be compromised by poor quality and brittle nails caused by fungal infections or deficiency in vitamins and minerals. Apply an anti-fungal cream and increase intake in vitamins A, C and E and minerals, including copper, iron and zinc for healthy nails.

Finger joints can be disfigured by osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Apart from managing a moderate protein diet, supplements such as vitamin C, D and K, as well as minerals including calcium, copper, magnesium and potassium will help manage arthritis.

FOR THE NECK:

- Medical lasers will achieve a smoother, brighter, less wrinkled appearance after four sessions of fortnightly treatments.
- Infrared light using the Titan can firm up the neck's sagging skin.
- A very gentle dose of hyaluronic acid can eliminate creases in the neck and the sagging effect when the skin loses its elasticity and youthfulness.

Holistic approach

Besides definitive treatments, we need to think and act holistically in caring not only for our face, hands or neck but the body as a whole. Our diet and lifestyle should play a part in our rejuvenating quest. Consuming more greens, regular exercises and adequate sleep are key to being skin- and body-fit. Minimise the oxidative effects on the skin by refraining from smoking and alcohol consumption.

In whatever we do, we should maintain a balance in life. While we strive to fight against premature ageing and retain the youthfulness of our appearance, we should not forget that attitude has a big part to play in our projection of who we are to others. No matter what life stage we are at, we should enjoy living life to the fullest. Like the saying goes, "You don't stop laughing because you grow old; you grow old because you stop laughing." ♥

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