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"Corner Lip" Lifts Are In Demand—Here's Why

Elise Tabin | November 3, 2022



Filler has reigned supreme for plumping lips over the last decade, but with filler fatigue looming, there's more demand than ever for longer-lasting solutions. In 2021, the American Academy of Facial Plastic And Reconstructive Surgery deemed the lip lift "on the rise." It was once an à la carte add-on for facelift patients wanting to shorten the distance between their upper lip and nose for better balance. Now, lip lift, and variations, like the corner lip lift, are everywhere.

A corner lip lift is one of the best ways to add height to the corners of the lip instead of just adding fullness. The long-lasting fix even has some people swearing off lip filler. Below, we break down everything you need to know about the trending corner lip lift.

What Is a Corner Lip Lift?

A corner lip lift is a surgical procedure that elevates the corners where the upper and lower lips meet. Removing a tiny sliver of skin (one to three millimeters long) lifts the corners of the lip and gives a smidge of volume and some rollout so the lips don't fall down and inwards. In addition, a corner lip lift, which takes about 60 minutes to complete under local anesthesia

(plan on being at your surgeon's office for close to two hours), focuses on the red part of the lip and the skin above it, known as the "white roll," so that more of the lateral lip shows.¹

Miguel Mascaró, MD, says historically, the corner lip lift addressed downturned corners. "In the last ten years, the technique has been modified," he adds. "In addition to upturning the corners, it flips the lip closer towards the middle. We can also eliminate a permanent upside-down frown, create a little volume, and roll the side of the lip."

A standard lip lift does a good job of picking up the upper lip, but it's not great at bringing up the entire lip or the corners. That's why a traditional lip lift often includes a corner lip lift, although both work as standalone procedures. "The lip lift helps with the overall shape but doesn't do much for surface area," Dr. Mascaró notes. "The corner lift is like the icing on the cake and creates a prettier shape at the corners."

The Benefits of a Corner Lip Lift

- Lifts droopy outer corners
- Eliminates frowning
- Balances the lips and improves the surface area
- Prevents the lips from tapering off
- Allows for more tooth show
- Rolls out the corners of the lips

The Best Candidates for a Corner Lip Lift

Kimberly Lee, MD, residing director of the Beverly Hills Facial Plastic Surgery Center, says the best candidates for a corner lip lift are those who feel the corners of their mouth drop at rest. Patients with little 'red lip' show, a short philtrum (the indented area between the nose and the upper lip), a small surface area, aging corners, and sides of the lips that collapse can also benefit from a corner lip lift.

The procedure is also favored for its ability to improve asymmetrical corners and its long-term effects, allowing those tired of repeat lip filler injections not to have to do them as often or at all.

How to Prepare for a Corner Lip Lift

First, do your research and find a qualified, board-certified plastic surgeon. Dr. Lee stresses the importance of working with an expert who can help prevent complications. After selecting your plastic surgeon, it's time to decide if you need to dissolve any existing lip filler. Oren Tepper, MD, says you and your plastic surgeon should discuss your volume goals during the consultation. "If you're planning on continuing with lip filler post-surgery, I recommend a lip lift

with the existing filler," he says. "But I would dissolve it if you are unsure about filler in the future."

Likewise, if your lip filler has migrated or shows signs of overfilling, it's best to remove it to prevent additional swelling. "The lip won't roll out properly if there's a bunch of filler hanging out," Dr. Mascaró explains. If your plastic surgeon recommends dissolving the filler, do it three weeks before surgery to soften up the tissue.

What to Expect During a Corner Lip Lift

Most corner lip lifts are done under local anesthesia (you will be awake and aware). First, your plastic surgeon will measure and mark the areas where you want more lift and roll at the corners. Next, the anesthesia is administered, and the surgeon will make a one-centimeter incision along the border of the white roll right at the corners of the mouth. "We remove a wedge of skin to roll out and elevate the corner of the lip," Dr. Tepper explains. Finally, sutures are placed, which will be removed about one week later.

Potential Side Effects

With a corner lip lift, the scar is a virtually invisible pencil-thin line hidden in the lip border. "The scars fade quickly (after a few weeks) and usually do not leave anything visible to the naked eye," Dr. Tepper says. But not everyone is so lucky, and those with a natural propensity for scarring may have more visible scars. "However, we can laser out any lingering redness or unevenness," he adds.

Most patients tolerate the surgery well, but there are potential yet rare side effects, including bleeding, infection, overcorrection, under correction, the inability to close the lips properly, and asymmetries.

Cost

The location of your plastic surgeon and the procedure details dictate the price. "For a corner lift, you're looking at anywhere between \$2000 and \$5000," Dr. Mascaró says. "For a combo lip lift, which includes a corner lift, it's more like \$5000 to \$12,000 or more." Dr. Lee adds that other factors, such as lip implant placement or reversal of fillers, can also affect pricing.

Aftercare

Although the results are immediately visible, the lips will be swollen and bruised for seven to 10 days—icing them will help reduce swelling. Expect some minimal pain, which you can treat with over-the-counter pain medication like Tylenol. Any remaining swelling should subside by week

three or four. "I've had patients do red carpet movie premieres, and awards shows four to six weeks later," Dr. Mascaró shares.

You'll need to keep the incisions dry and the lips free of skincare and makeup, especially lipstick, which can tattoo the incision if it seeps into it. After 10 days, you should be in the clear to return to your regular beauty routine. For the first three weeks, Dr. Mascaró says it's crucial to avoid the sun, which can pigment the incisions. "Wear a mask to protect the lips, and then switch to a powder sunscreen," he adds. "Also, don't drink thru straws, which puts tension on the scar."

Corner Lip Lift vs. Lip Filler

The corner lip lift works wonders for improving the shape of the upper lip, addressing proportion issues, and creating more surface area. But, as far as substantial volume goes, that's the job of hyaluronic acid fillers. "Surgery can fix the structure and shape; filler is not good for that. But, if you want that extra definition, you need filler," Dr. Mascaró says. "After surgery, patients who continue with filler tend to do less of it and less frequently. The filler looks better and lasts longer, so it's a net win."

In the case of lip wrinkling, Dr. Lee says either filler or a lip implant can soften it. "The implant seems to be a less favored option because it is a more permanent solution."

The Final Takeaway

Once the lips are fully healed, expect more tooth show and elevation at the outer corners, which will rejuvenate the face. The results are permanent, and although the lips will continue to age, the corners should stay lifted for about ten years, if not longer.

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