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Got Dark Circles? Try An Expert-Approved Under-Eye Filler Alternative

Jessica Ourisman | June 7, 2024



Before and six days after the Trifecta Lift at Kami Parsa MD. KAMI PARSA MD

The strategic placement of hyaluronic filler into the tear troughs can be transformative for dark circles and under-eye hollows—but only on the right candidates. In practice, the area is prone to filler-related complications that send patients to aesthetic experts to seek help reversing them. Prominent surgeons have also expressed concern on social media regarding the pervasiveness of filler-related complications in the eye area. They also note the industry-wide over-filling of unviable candidates, such as those with under eye bags and fat herniation.

“As far as who is actually a candidate, there is [only] a very small subset of people that should be getting tear trough filler,” oculoplastic surgeon Kami Parsa says on a phone call. He describes the anatomy of the eye area as “unforgiving” in how easily its lymphatic pathways can become obstructed, hindering the drainage of lymph fluid that is critical for bodily detoxification and immune health. This buildup of fluid results in the common under-eye filler complication known as malar edema, the chronic puffiness impacting the transition between the under-eye and cheek.



Figure 4. from a study of recurrent eyelid edema caused by injectable hyaluronic filler to the ... [+]AESTHETIC SURGERY JOURNAL

Many plastic surgeons believed that filler was a cause of lymphatic obstruction, but lacked definitive proof until a 2023 study on post-hyaluronic acid eyelid edema (PHAREE)—which was co-authored by Dr. Parsa—was published in the peer-reviewed *Aesthetic Surgery Journal*. The article was one of the academic journal's most-read of the year, moving the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (BAAPS) to issue a caution around the use of filler that October. At their annual scientific conference, plastic surgeon Spero Theodorou called under-eye filler one of the “biggest problems,” referencing “women everywhere with swollen eyes.”

“Fillers can be great, but everything has side-effects,” says board-certified oculoplastic surgeon Guy Massry over the phone. Over the course of his career, Dr. Massry reports seeing fluid-retention, lymphatic obstruction, inflammation, nodules, filler migration and even tissue changes that he believes to be linked to under-eye filler. He posits that complications stem from incorrect placement, over-filling, non-uniform filler degradation, the mixing of fillers with different osmotic densities and improper patient selection.

Double-board certified plastic surgeon Ben Talei has seen successful filler placement in the area, but he has also witnessed “perfectly placed filler on appropriate candidates” leading to complications “months or years down the road.” These include color changes (a phenomenon known as the Tyndall effect, e-mails board-certified plastic surgeon **Kimberly Lee**) as well as malar edema, e-mails board-certified plastic surgeon Cat Chang.

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