

Fill Harmonics

DERMAL FILLERS ARE VERSATILE TOOLS FOR PERFECTING FACIAL CONTOURS—BUT THEY ARE NOT WITHOUT RISK.

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Injectables account for more than half of the minimally invasive procedures performed today. Before Restylane (Medicis, restylaneusa.com), the first non-animal-based hyaluronic acid (HA) dermal filler, was introduced in the United States in 2003, botulinum toxin was the most popular injectable in aesthetic medicine. Today, Botox has taken a backseat in growth to HA injections, which have increased to more than 1.3 million procedures per year.

As the demand for fillers has increased, so too has the number of available materials. Finding the right dermal filler is a little like choosing the right brush if you're a painter or selecting the best clay for your project if you're a sculptor. A free-flowing hyaluronic acid gel may be the perfect tool for painting a plumper lip, while a

thicker filler with a higher molecular weight may serve you best for adding definition to the chin or cheekbones.

Choosing Your Tools

While today's HA fillers are all non-animal sourced and stabilized, they do have some important differences, including the manner in which the molecules are cross-linked, the particle size and their affinity to bind water (hydrophilic properties). These distinctions determine a filler's G prime, its hardness or resistance to deformation. Picture squirting out the contents of a tube of toothpaste. If the paste retains its shape without flattening, the material reflects a high G prime; a runny liquid that rapidly loses its peak formation has a low G prime.

Restylane and Perlane (Medicis, restylaneusa.com) demonstrate stiffer qualities than other currently available HA fillers in the United States, which translates to a higher lift capacity, according to [Joel L. Cohen, MD](#), medical director of AboutSkin Dermatology and DermSurgery, Englewood, Colorado, and a published author on fillers and complications. The stiffer quality of these fillers provides not only lift but also structural support. They are, therefore, more suited for creating a cheekbone, increasing chin projection or temple lifting.

Other fillers, like Belotero Balance (Merz Aesthetics, belotero.com) and Juvederm (Allergan, juvederm.com), are softer materials that are ideal for filling lips, nasolabial folds and finer lines.

Juvederm, one of the more hydrophilic fillers, is a popular tool for imparting a soft shape around the lips but is not as well suited for treatment around the eyes, where [Dr. Cohen](#) notes that swelling and edema could occur as a result of the filler's hydrophilic properties. He suggests that Restylane, which is not quite as hydrophilic, might work better for treating the tear troughs and the nasojugal folds. Each physician has his or her own favorites. [Dr. Cohen](#) will often use Juvederm Ultra Plus in nasolabial folds to create a "nice, natural correction that doesn't tend to ridge" like some of the stiffer fillers. For the lips, he likes Juvederm Ultra with Restylane along the vermilion border if a bit more projection is desired.