

For Michelle, this is what
feeling great looks like

MAJOR CHANGE

MICHELLE “MICKY” MAJOR WAS getting ready for a charity ball when the woman smiling back at her from the mirror caught her by surprise.

“It was like looking at a different person. I couldn’t believe it,” she said. “That was the first time I had been really dressed up since my plastic surgery (three months earlier), and I didn’t feel my age at all.”

All this happened a little more than two years ago. And Major, now 58, still gets a kick out of greeting that younger-looking woman in the mirror every morning. “When you feel good about yourself, that permeates everything you do,” she said. And, “I think I look better than I did 15 years ago.”

The Toms River woman first consid-

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FOR GLEN GOLDBAUM 72, RED BANK

Michelle
Major's
new look.

FACE FACTS

ered having some work done on her face because wrinkles, just like the ones Mom used to have, were showing up around her lip and chin. Then she lost 46 pounds on Weight Watchers, causing her face to sag and look even older. Talk about a dubious distinction for a job well done.

Those events eventually led Major to the Toms River office of Dr. Christopher Godek at Personal Enhancement Center. She initially asked the plastic surgeon about procedures that wouldn't require going under the knife, such as laser resurfacing or injections of fillers under the skin.

After careful study, Godek predicted a 30 percent improvement if Major took that course versus 80 percent if she opted for face-lift surgery. "To me it was a no-brainer. I wanted them (the wrinkles) gone," she said. "Some things cannot be corrected with just shots. If you can afford it, don't be frightened of it."

Major didn't need eye or forehead work. So Godek reshaped the lower half of her face by going through subtle incisions around the ears and under the chin, eliminating excess tissue, fat and skin along the way. She keeps the look fresh with annual injections of Juvéderm, a facial filler, above the lip and chin and Botox shots in the forehead every four months or so.

Two years after surgery, Major remains thrilled with the results. "After I had the surgery, people I hadn't seen in a while would look at me and say, 'You look good, rested.'"

Of course, not everyone needs surgery. Many patients, especially those in their 30s and 40s who are concerned about minor lines and fine wrinkles, can achieve satisfying results through less invasive procedures right in the doctor's office. "We talk about injectables as the gateway to plastic surgery," said Dr. Matthew Kaufman of the Plastic Surgery Center of New Jersey and Manhattan, which is based in Shrewsbury.

Surgery can often wait until 10 or 15 years down the road, as the skin loses some of its elasticity and gravity drags down fat cells in the cheeks, eyes and lower face. But in any case, the idea is that "a youthful, healthy appearance is a full face, a face that has volume to it," Kaufman said.

In the early days of plastic surgery, doctors merely cut out drooping skin and pulled the rest tight. "That gives a flattened, unnatural look," Godek said. He noted that today's methods are a lot more sophisticated, as surgeons focus on "redraping and gently reshaping the skin." They also take steps to address drooping muscle, tissue and even bone. ✦



Michelle Major after surgery. She keeps her look fresh with annual Juvéderm injections above the lip and chin and Botox treatments to the forehead about every four months. Below: Major prior to surgery.



BEFORE



AFTER

Michelle Major's transformation: Dr. Christopher Godek of Personal Enhancement Center, Toms River, reshaped the lower half of her face.

O P T I O N S

BOTOX SHOT: \$443 This injection temporarily reduces or eliminates frown lines, forehead creases, crow's-feet near the eyes and thick bands in the neck. The toxin blocks the nerve impulses, temporarily paralyzing the muscles that cause wrinkles, while giving the skin a smoother, more refreshed appearance. Lasts about four months.

BREAST IMPLANTS: \$3,603 TO \$3,885 Rubber shells filled with silicone gel or saline are placed in front of or behind the major chest muscle. They are inserted via incisions under the breast, in the armpit or around the areola.

BREAST LIFT: \$4,380 Restores a saggy bust line. Popular with women whose breasts have lost shape or firmness due to weight loss, pregnancy or breast-feeding. Skin around the lower area of the breast is removed, and the nipple and areola are moved to a higher position.

CHEMICAL PEEL: \$704 Rejuvenates the face by applying a chemical solution to remove uneven pigment, wrinkles and sun damage.

EYELID SURGERY: \$2,921 Reduces bags around the eyes. Incisions are made along the upper and lower lids to remove excess skin and fat. Surgeons sometimes go through the lower eyelid lining instead.

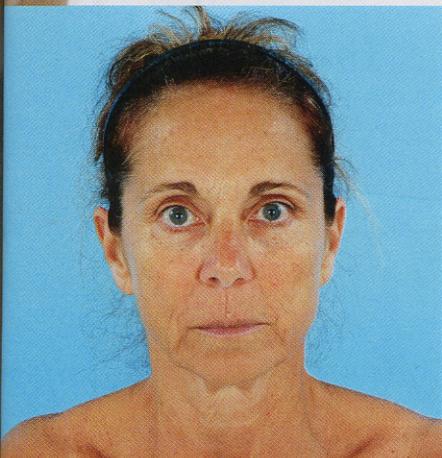
FACE LIFT: \$6,728 TO \$15,000 Incisions are made in discreet locations, such as the hair-line and around the ears. Skin and underlying tissue are then removed or repositioned. Fatty deposits may be removed, and muscles may be tightened.

INJECTABLE FILLERS: \$411 TO \$700 Various substances are injected under the skin to reduce frown and smile lines, crow's-feet and wrinkles in general. They also may be used to enhance lip fullness. One of the first fillers was collagen, a protein derived from cows or humans that is still widely used. Another popular filler is hyaluronic acid, which goes by the brand name Juvéderm. Both can last up to a year and dissolve naturally inside the body.

LASER SKIN RESURFACING: \$1,145 TO \$2,094 A laser device is used to smooth or remove upper layers of skin, resulting in a more youthful appearance.

LIPOPLASTY: \$2,874 Also known as liposuction, a surgeon uses a vacuum device to suction out unwanted fat from the abdomen, buttocks, legs, arms, face or neck. The doctor also may perform surgery to tighten or remove resulting baggy skin.

Source: American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. Costs represent average prices charged by U.S. surgeons for their services in 2008. They do not include facility fees, which generally run from \$500 to \$2,000. Patients also should expect to pay at least \$1,000 for anesthesia and additional amounts for medical tests, medications and other incidentals.



BODY WORKS