

Health & Medicine

Bone Loss, Aging and Facial Appearance



Michelle Cantwell, DMD

The appearance of aging is due to a number of things, not just one cause. Our patients often ask about treatment options to soften wrinkles and restore a more youthful appearance.

As a prosthodontist, Dr. Michelle Cantwell sees every day that changes in the soft tissues of the face are related to the amount of bone loss in the upper and lower jaw. When all the teeth are lost, the bone in the jaw undergoes an immediate and drastic change. This bone loss can result in: the collapse of the muscles around the mouth, loss of lip support, inversion of the lips, increased wrinkles, and a sunken appearance to the cheeks. As the bone loss proceeds over time, the chin will appear more prominent and the nose and chin appear to be too close together. The end result? Everyone can picture the “sucking on a sour lemon” image of a person without their denture in place.

Unfortunately, once teeth are gone, the bone loss and changes to the facial profile will continue and become worse unless the teeth are replaced with dental implants. Dental implants are replacements for the roots of the teeth. Implants can essentially “trick” your body into thinking that a tooth is still present and prevents further deterioration of the jaw. Dental implants can be used to replace one

tooth or an entire mouth of missing teeth. After the underlying supportive structures are re-established, many patients request information about further minimizing the appearance of lines and wrinkles. The appearance of wrinkles and facial folds can be smoothed by adding structure and volume underneath and bringing sunken skin back to the surface.

How Wrinkles Can Be Corrected

One option to combat the remaining wrinkles is Juvederm™. Juvederm is an injectable gel that plastic surgeon Dr. Lisa Learn can ease under the skin to instantly smooth the wrinkles or folds that look like parentheses along the side of your mouth and nose. Juvaderma is a quick in-office procedure and the results aren't just immediate, they are long

lasting, smooth, natural in appearance. Another option offered by Dr. Learn is Botox®. This minimally invasive therapy has been used for over 16 years. Botox is also a simple, nonsurgical procedure that improves moderate to severe frown lines. A trained Doctor would make a few tiny injections to paralyze the muscle that creates the frown lines. Patients typically see results within a few days and minimal discomfort is experienced when the gel is applied.

The World Health Organization now considers a regular lower complete denture without implants to be below the minimum standard of care!



*Lisa J. Learn, DO
Plastic Surgeon*

For information on the Lancaster County Center for Plastic Surgery, Please Call (717) 721-5800

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