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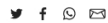
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'Tech neck' is the number one beauty breaker of 2020 - this is how to fix it

Constant video calls have led to an increase in requests for neck treatments - but proceed with caution, advise top cosmetic doctors

By Sarah Kennedy NEW YORK
25 October 2020 - 7:00am

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Tech neck is an increasing concern in the era of Zoom calls | CREDIT: Getty Images

Remember tech neck? A buzz phrase from the early days of smartphones and laptops has returned as the biggest beauty-breaker of 2020, thanks to Covid-19 and its resulting lockdowns.

Cosmetic doctors across the globe report an increase in patients seeking treatment for the dreaded sagging, creases and deep lines caused by overuse of our looking-down muscles. In response, new, non-surgical solutions based on muscle mechanics and skin cell activity are said to be delivering long-lasting results.

“Neck lines arise from a combination of three mechanisms,” explains Dr Heidi Waldorf, a leading American cosmetic dermatologist who directed a session on new treatments at the recent ASDS (American Society for Dermatologic Surgery) conference.

“My patient population has been asking me about neck treatments for years,” she told me shortly after. “But there has been a bump up in neck questions because of all the pandemic Zoom calls.”



The muscles in your neck work differently when you're constantly looking down | CREDIT: Getty Images

Explaining the main causes of these new lines you may well be catching sight of in the bathroom mirror, Dr Waldorf says, “firstly, movement and bending the neck causes wrinkles in the folds of skin over time, similar to the way crow’s feet or the ‘11’s’ as doctors call them, settle in between the eyes. Then, the underlying platysma muscle

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beneath the neck pulls on the skin, causing vertical neck bands and aggravating horizontal lines. Photodamage and dry skin on the neck will then make all that worse.”

Without a professional video studio at our fingertips, many of us are discovering just how bad the angles and lighting for most Zoom calls are. “People have now spent months staring at themselves since the first lockdown,” says Dr Waldorf. “Studies of video chats and of the way we look at photos of ourselves show that we have trouble looking away from our own image. That leads to hours of studying our imperfections.”

I am told that exercise and weight loss can emphasise vertical lines, leading to the appearance of ‘ostrich neck’ in a bad, rather than elongated, beautiful way. Gaining weight will also add to skin-sagging and horizontal lines, so really, we can’t win on our own.

World-renowned Dr Jean Carruthers, the former ophthalmologist who, with her husband, Dr Alasdair Carruthers, first introduced Botulinum Toxin for aesthetic use has very recently uncovered new ways the neuromodulator can work to beat tech neck.

“The neck is a very exciting area to work in,” she tells me over the phone from her office in Vancouver. “It used to be thought that Botox was best for the upper face and fillers were better below, now we know both work very well together.

“Dr Ada Trindade de Almeida from Brazil and I have done a lot of work around the platysma muscle which runs from the collarbone to chin. Although it is thought of as a neck muscle, it is also a muscle of the lower face. As we age the platysma starts pulling the face down which has a knock-on effect, exacerbated by environmental factors such as looking down and skin aging.”



An increase in video calls has led to people staring at their faces more than usual | CREDIT: Getty Images

Correctly identifying and paralyzing the ‘right’ muscle spot with a neuromodulator in a patient’s platysma can prompt surrounding muscles to work harder, explained Dr Carruthers, preventing downward drag on facial skin and the development of deep lines in the neck. Her findings have filtered down and entered into the most sought-after aesthetic doctors’ arsenal of tech neck treatments.

Top UK-based aesthetic doctor [Kate Goldie](#), who partnered with Dr Waldorf at the ASDS conference, is “all about regeneration”. “For me,” she says, “successful treatment of tech neck lies in new treatments that prompt tissue regrowth, instead of simply puffing out neck lines with filler or paralyzing with a neuromodulator.”

Dr Goldie’s favourite combination goes something like this: “A three-part treatment that not only looks good now but will still look good in ten years time could start with activation of underlying skin tissue on the neck via laser or ultrasound. Micro damage beneath the skin caused by this machine activation reacts well to being followed by PRP injections, or other similar cell-regenerative ingredients, including hormones and exosomes.”



Better posture can help reduce the effects of tech neck | CREDIT: Getty Images

Exosomes are a type of extracellular vesicle containing protein, DNA, and RNA that trigger regenerative behavior when injected into skin cells. Dr Goldie also likes to use fillers for jaw edges and restructuring saggy bits. “I would also look at strengthening

certain areas with a boosting block or a biostimulatory filler such as hyperdiluted calcium hydroxyapatite (Radiesse) to improve the texture,” she says.

Skin regeneration is a hot marketing touchpoint for aesthetic surgery’s most-wanted clients and those most likely to suffer with tech neck, the 40-plus age group. The upper echelons of doctors are keen to shake off the filler-and-trout-pout reputation cosmetic dermatology has garnered by steering advertising and social media targets away from younger age groups who tend to only book a single high-impact treatment at a time, and who cannot afford more sophisticated - and expensive - procedures.

Dr Patricia Ogilvie, who practices in Munich, refers to 2020 as the year of ‘Yold’, with UHNW individuals desperate to know more about developments in aesthetic medicine. “For the first time, 50 percent of the world’s population is aged over 30. In wealthy countries, 11 percent are over 65. This age group is my fastest growing demographic. They are tech savvy, positive agers who are also ‘healthspan aware.’”



Placing your phone in your direct line of vision can help reduce the effects of tech neck | CREDIT: Getty Images

Meanwhile, back in London, Dr Jane Leonard, who practices at Harvey Nichols Medispa during non-Covid times, told us that tech neck has returned with a vengeance. She is something of an expert, having written a paper on the syndrome back in 2017.

“Treatments have become super high-tech and effective since 2007 but my clients are really worrying about their necks again. However, the same rules still apply: neck work requires high level medical expertise due to the thinner skin and important nerves and arteries connecting body to brain.”

Dr Leonard likes to use neuromodulators for treatment of tech neck lines on slender and younger patients aged up to 40. “For heavier patients and people who want to see real lift in their necks I would recommend a threadlift,” she says. “However, people should really do their homework and find an extremely experienced practitioner.”

Dr Leonard believes in the holistic approach. “Being aware of neck position, holding the head up, placing technology at eye-level when possible and really focusing on your posture is a start,” she says. “Plus, taking sun-protective care of your skin can really help to deter and defer the dreaded, but probably inevitable, tech neck.”

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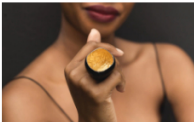


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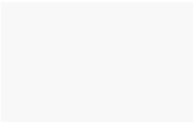
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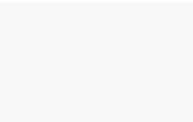
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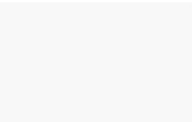
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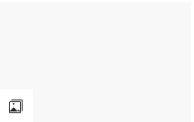
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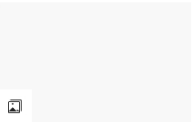
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