

Bank fat to rejuvenate face

NEW TREND People who have undergone fat removal surgeries are storing the fat lost for use for future procedures

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MUMBAI: When Bandra resident Sonia Arora, 47, consulted a cosmetic surgeon for facial rejuvenation, she had no idea that the fat removed from her stomach could be stored in a fat bank and later again be used for cosmetic purposes.

"The idea of a fat bank seemed good," said the housewife, who got her fat banked in January. The next time she required additional fat for the touch up procedure, the doctor took it from the bank. Arora's fat is refrigerated with 69 other containers from different patients in Dr Mohan Thomas's cosmetic clinic in Bandra. The bank will be useful for at least two years and is mainly used for facial rejuvenation procedures and buttock augmentation.

After blood, milk and stem cells, people can now also bank their fat for cosmetic reasons. Thomas, who started a fat bank as a free service for his patients in his clinic in 2003, has seen



Dr Mohan Thomas treats a patient at his Bandra clinic.

SATTISH BATE/HIPHOTOS

a substantial increase in number of people saying yes to fat banks because of increasing popularity of facial rejuvenation. Today, about of a fourth of Thomas's patients come in for facial rejuvenation.

Forty people availed the service of fat storage in his clinic this year. "Last year, we got thirty registrations. Earlier there were hardly a few takers. Now more than half of my patients know about the concept and

don't mind trying it," said Thomas, a cosmetic surgeon.

"We recommend fat storage for those patients who come in for liposuction, body contouring and those who are expected to need fat for soft tissue augmentation as a result of aging or for touch up procedures after initial soft tissue surgery," added Thomas. Patients between 30 to 50 years are more keen on preserving their fat as they are likely to want procedure done

in the near future because of the aging process. However, doctors don't recommend saving the fat beyond two years.

According to Dr Anil Tibrewala, plastic and cosmetic surgeon, Hinduja Hospital, fat banking is convenient for patients.

"Fat banking is an excellent concept as patients don't have to undergo surgical procedure such as liposuction every time autologous fat is required for facial rejuvenation," said Dr Tibrewala.

But then are those who think it is not as useful. Cosmetic surgeon Lakshyajit Dhami said, "A bank is required when there is paucity of something. Fat is mostly available in abundance in humans, except in certain cases. Also, after the facial rejuvenation, a person might not require the fat for a long time. Also, using fresh fat is always better."

There are not many fat banks in the country. "It requires substantial investment. The demand for facial aesthetic is increasing, but not enough to support such a programme," said Tibrewala.

ABOUT THE PROCEDURE

WHAT IS A FAT BANK?

The term fat bank typically refers to storage of fat, where fat tissue or adipose aspirates [fat that is sucked out] collected from liposuction of patients are centrifuged, labeled with names and identification number and preserved for future use.

Aspirated fat is centrifuged at 3000 rpm for three to five minutes for removing non-viable components of fat aspirate such as oil and blood. This sample is then preserved in containers in refrigerators at a set temperature. The fat is discarded after two years.

Fat aspirates are stored for future to use it for the same patient who is expected to need it for various applications such as facial augmentation, correction of soft tissue defects, buttock augmentation among others.

DERMAL FILLERS AND FAT TRANSFERS

Dermal fillers are water-soluble compounds available in absorbable and non-absorbable formats.

According to doctors, increasing number of patients prefer fat transfers to dermal fillers. Dermal fillers can last for 6 to 12 months after injecting.

"Use of non-absorbable dermal fillers in few cases can cause side effects such as skin infections. Dermal filler treatment can cost anywhere between Rs 15,000 to 30,000," said Dr Lakshyajit Dhami.

Fat is a living cell and includes stem cells. "Stem cells bring rejuvenation to the over lined skin where they are injected," said Dr Mohan Thomas.

The complete procedure of using fat cells/stem cells as fillers in patients can cost between Rs 30,000 to Rs 50,000. According to doctors fat cells do not cause any side effects.



INVESTING IN A FAT BANK

Setting up a fat bank requires a full-fledged laboratory, operation theatre setting and a dedicated refrigeration unit, which needs an investment of least Rs 3-4 lakh.