



## FACING UP

I'm lying in a chair while a South African woman injects acid under my skin. The procedure I'm going through is what you call a "non-surgical" facelift. Now when I hear the word, "non-surgical," my mind automatically turns to thoughts of crystals and seaweed wraps. In other words, stuff that doesn't actually work.

I'm booked into Clinic 42 in Auckland and here are the lengths I'll go to for you, dear reader, I'm going to have hyaluronic-acid injected into my face.


Dr Romanowska gives me a mirror and asks me to have a look at myself – not something I feel completely comfortable with at the best of times. I decide to target the hollows under my eyes. Too many late nights and hitting 40 has made the old bags look a lot baggier.

The whole thing starts with Dr Romanowska asking me to go away and think about it overnight. No pressure and no surgery. So I return the next day, more determined than ever to go through with this.

It starts pleasantly enough with an attractive woman applying a cool anesthetic gel to my face. There's no way of sugar-coating this, there are going to be needles under my skin, so it's important it doesn't hurt too much. Without being too macho about it, the injections aren't really that bad. The way it works is that the hyaluronic-acid fills in my skin from underneath. It lifts the skin, filling out the wrinkles and hollows.

So here's what crafty Dr Romanowska does. She does one side of my face first and then hands me the mirror. I hadn't realised how tired and "hang-dog" my face had become. Now one side of it still looks deputy dog while the other side, well, it looks fresher, younger and it only took about eight minutes. The difference between the two sides of my face is really noticeable. But not too noticeable. I don't look all LA plastic, I still look like me, just better. In fact, over the next few days, my friends don't really see the difference. But they do begin to say the odd thing like have I lost weight or have I been away?

But before all that goes down, I have to ask the good doctor to do the other side of my face.

The effects of the treatment can last up to 12 months but typically last from six to nine months. The hyaluronic-acid breaks down into simple sugars and your body uses it as energy, so the effects (unlike a surgical facelift) aren't permanent. So if I'm not happy with my new, healthy look, all I have to do is wait for it to wear off. 

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NICK WARD