

Conserve and protect

'Manscaping' is a way to reap the benefits of cosmetic procedures without the stigma of going under the knife

Once the preserve of ageing movie stars and ladies who lunch, cosmetic procedures are increasingly finding favour with alpha males. But banish all thoughts of wind-tunnel-taut faces and frozen foreheads, this latest generation of techniques guarantees subtle results, favouring the syringe over the scalpel.

While 'manscaping' has its origins in the cosmetic surgery industry, this increasingly popular offshoot has different hallmarks, notably the demand for discreet improvement with minimal downtime. 'Women are quite happy for their transformation to take time and be played out in public,' explains dermatological surgeon Dr Sandeep Cliff. 'But men don't have that luxury. For them, "having a little work done" still carries a stigma.'

Discretion might be necessary but it's definitely not proved a stumbling block and clinics nationwide report that 20 to 25 per cent of all non-invasive procedures are now performed on men. So what are they having done?

Face One in five people having Botox is male, according to the latest figures from Transform, the UK's leading cosmetic surgery group. Botox paralyses major facial muscles for up to four months, helping to fake a rested-even-when-stressed look. 'Most men are requesting treatment between their brows to help soften those vertical lines,' explains Rajiv Grover, consultant plastic surgeon and Secretary of the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons. 'By injecting just under the corner of the brow and into the upper crow's feet area we can create a fresher-looking face that's crucially still able to show emotion.' Grover recommends avoiding shots to the forehead as the effect will be too obvious. And always use a qualified practitioner (visit baaps.org.uk to find one).

Many men are also plumping for skin resurfacing treatments. These are super-charged forms of exfoliation using either microdermabrasion to sandblast skin smooth, or a topically applied peel mask that 'eats away' the top few layers of skin; both help brighten up dull skin. 'Men have a pretty low pain threshold,' explains Malvina Fraser, leading aesthetician at the Rakus Clinic in Knightsbridge. 'So we tend to avoid the harsh chemical peels and use natural fruit acids instead to give them a fresh glow.' Sensitive types had best steer well clear of these treatments as even normal skin will experience dryness and flaking that takes days to shed. Best left to leathery skins or those with pock marks and acne scars.

Be wary of treatments that offer lazy-boy fixes, especially ones that claim to tone up slack jowls or reduce double chins. Devices such as Thermage and Polaris have grown in popularity, using radio frequency to superheat and then shrink back the skin's supportive collagen network. Treatment is eye-wateringly expensive and results take months. It can be hit and miss and – for men wanting to keep their treatments under wraps – skin is left looking flushed for several days after a treatment.

Teeth Many dentists are now branching out into more elaborate cosmetic dentistry. 'Great teeth are the cornerstone of a well-groomed look,' explains leading cosmetic dentist Dr Anoop Maini. 'And there are now

numerous ways to improve your smile.' Maini says the Hollywood 'tombstone' look is over and men especially want a smile that doesn't look too perfect. The latest veneers, such as Thineers and DuraTHIN, are made up of minute pixels of different milky shades to help avoid that pearly-white effect – a sure-fire giveaway that you've had something done. 'Each tooth has a custom-made jacket that slips over it,' he explains. 'With no filing down it's a pain-free way to quickly make over your mouth.'

While A-list smiles are out, ironically it was Tom Cruise wearing braces in his 40s that sparked a trend among men to correct crooked teeth with systems such as Six Month Smiles. Using tooth-coloured brackets and translucent wires, the system guarantees a good cosmetic improvement in less than 24 weeks. 'Unlike kids' braces that change bite and alignment this is a purely aesthetic fix so it works really quickly, if superficially,' Maini explains.

Body Many men are also catching on to laser hair removal, with treatments ranging from the conventional (deforesting backs and beards) to the more obscure (creating heart-shaped 'bikini' lines and depilating nostrils). 'Lasers such as IPL reduce hair growth and men often see the benefits after just one session,' says Peter Beard of non-surgical specialists SkinGenesis. For best results, though, you'll need to commit to about a year's treatment. Grey hairs are the hardest to treat – opt for electrolysis instead, which is more painful but definitely more productive for silver foxes. ♣

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