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Injecting Insights

by **JENNIFER UPDIKE** | photography by **ALISON DUNLAP**

These days, it seems as though almost every medical clinician—and even some professionals who lack any medical training—offers a menu of facial injectables for maintaining or restoring an individual's youthfulness. Pooja Malik, M.D., a board-certified physician with Malik Medical Aesthetics, offers the following advice: **Buyer beware.**

Dr. Malik, who considers facial injectables a combination of art and science, would know. From dermal fillers to Botox and other neuromodulators, she says each facial injectable has its own specific purpose. Likewise, facial injectables have an inherent risk, especially when they are being performed by someone who does not have the adequate knowledge and expertise.

In her practice with Malik Medical Aesthetics, a destination “where science meets beauty,” Dr. Malik strives to offer uncompromising quality of care, equaled only by her compassionate demeanor and bedside manner. She has received extensive training in the use of Botox and dermal fillers, as well as facial fat transfer. In addition, she specializes in the correction of injectables performed by unskilled

providers, which can be costly and time consuming for the patient.

Dr. Malik is a member of the International Association for Physicians in Aesthetic Medicine and the American Academy of Cosmetic Physicians. She is also an associate member of the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery, the American Society of Laser Medicine and Surgery, and the Botox Cosmetic Physicians Network.

When we spoke with Dr. Malik, she offered her perspective on the ways in which prospective patients can educate themselves before choosing an injectables provider.

Q&A

People have many options when it comes to choosing an injectables provider. What do they need to know before settling on a specific one?

To your point, the facial injectables marketplace has become crowded with a lot of providers. That's a blessing and a curse for patients, because not all providers are created equally. Ideally, you want someone who is not only skilled at performing these procedures, but also someone who knows you as a patient and cares for you as an individual. The right injector will leave you looking and feeling like your best self. My advice is to choose wisely.

When vetting different providers, do your research. Find out about the provider's personality, how they run their business, and their skill and experience in performing injectables. Also, you need to know which products they offer, because not all injectors offer the same lineup of products, and different products are used for different things. Price is an important consideration, too, but not the most important. Of all those factors—the person, the product, and the price—probably the most important factor is the person who will be performing the procedure, because he or she ultimately determines the end result. Facial injectables are equal parts art and science, so the provider's experience and artistic sensibilities mean everything.

Specifically, what kind of research should people do? What questions should they ask of a provider?

Start by reading online reviews, and look for any red flags that might suggest problems or unsatisfactory results. It's also a good idea to meet with providers in person to have any questions answered, and to get a good understanding of the risks, realistic results, and limitations of the treatment. Ask providers about their training, experience, and other credentials, such as board certifications. Also, ask about any complications their prior patients might have had. Complications may happen from time to time, but an injector should be willing to discuss this topic candidly.

Also, you should choose a provider who performs these procedures in a professional setting; we have all heard about "Botox parties," which are hardly an ideal place to get injections performed. Lastly, review the provider's website and social media presence for any before-and-after photos that show the results of the provider's work. These photos will show the provider's best work, but they will also reveal certain

patterns. In our area, most people prefer a subtle or natural-looking result, so you want a provider who can help you show improvement without any indication that you had anything done.

You mentioned "red flags." Can you provide some examples that people should steer clear of when vetting an injectables provider?

Someone who does not have an online presence is a telling sign. That said, just because someone has an online presence does not mean they are the best choice, but someone who has not taken the time to share their expertise and results suggests they may not be the best choice. Also, when speaking with a prospective provider, honesty is essential. If the provider is unwilling to discuss potential complications and their plan to deal with them, or if they do not fully explain all of the risks, look elsewhere.

Is low price a red flag, too?

There's an old saying, "If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is." That saying applies to the price of facial injectables. In other words, don't choose an injector only because they are the least expensive, because you will likely pay for that "bargain" in some other way: lesser quality, inadequate training, or, worst of all, a compromised result. So, if a provider quotes a price that seems dramatically lower than others you have received, my best advice would be to keep looking. At the very least, be sure to research that provider more thoroughly before making your decision.

Can you outline the difference between someone who is qualified or approved to administer facial injectables versus someone who is not?

Let's start with those who are approved. These professionals include physicians—an M.D. or a D.O., preferably board certified in cosmetic and aesthetic medicine—plastic surgeons, dermatologists, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants, as well as registered nurses under the supervision of a physician. Those who are not approved to administer injectables include medical assistants, aestheticians, licensed vocational nurses, and salon professionals, among others.

Should people consider personal referrals as well?

Very much so, yes. Having a friend or a family member who is pleased with their treatment and results is a great starting point. Ask them about their experience and if they have any hesitation about recommending their provider. One caveat: If they recommend a nurse injector, proceed with caution; there are plenty of qualified and experienced nurse injectors, but it's best to consult a physician before moving forward.

Everyone who is considering facial injectables is going down this road for the same reason: They want to look and feel better about themselves. You only have one face, so it's critical to choose the right provider to perform your facial rejuvenation. ■



Dr. Pooja Malik, medical director



Tina Hawk, practice director



For more information on Malik Medical Aesthetics, including addresses and contact information for its three locations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, visit **MalikMedicalAesthetics.com**.