

## **INFORMATION SHEET SKIN/FAT GRAFTS TO THE FACE**

It is possible to transfer skin from a part of the body where it isn't essential and graft it into the face to swell hollows or dips outwards. One first has to remove the outer layer of the skin from the donor site so that it has a raw surface all the way round, so that it has a means of linking up its blood vessels with the blood vessels in the face. Most dermis grafts last for a long time, ie, 6-12 months or more, and are very useful at bulking out areas which are deficient, but nearly all of them lose a high percentage of their volume with the passage of time. In this way they can be very effective at first but disappointing after a year or so. They are often used for swelling out the margins of the lips or filling in hollows in the cheeks or in the eyelids. They can also be used for bolstering up the cheek bones to give an apparently higher cheek bone level.

The main problem about them is that they are not 100% reliable and ultimately most people are disappointed once they shrink and disappear.

A small percentage are very successful for very much longer and there are some lucky people in whom a dermis graft solves their problem completely and permanently.

Fat grafting is a technique which for a long time was thought completely useless because it didn't work. This was because very large quantities of fat were taken from one part of the body in the form of a chunk as a solid block and put in to wherever it was thought to be needed. Most of it then broke down and dissolved away or caused other problems. It has been recognised increasingly in the last 10 years, however, that if one takes tiny quantities of fat from one part of the body like the abdomen or hips, one can inject it through the skin to where it is needed. This can be a very effective way of gradually building up contours and obliterating wrinkles and grooves and swelling out areas of scarring. This is a method which has been used increasingly in the United States. I was at a lecture recently in which an American demonstrated this method. It looks relatively straightforward and I think might well be a successful method if used carefully and not too ambitiously but repeated over a period of months so that not too much fat is transferred at any one session.

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