Women in their 40s: Improvement through noninvasive interventions

Skin laxity
As people age, their skin begins to lose collagen and elastin, making it thinner and looser, without the resilient, springy quality of youthful skin, says board-certified dermatologist Anne M. Chapas, MD, FAAD, a clinical instructor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York. Skin laxity is most prevalent on the face and neck, she says, but it can occur anywhere on the body, including the arms, abdomen and thighs.

Everyone will experience some amount of skin laxity as they get older, Dr. Chapas says, but the degree of laxity depends on many factors, including sun damage, exposure to pollution, diet, weight fluctuations and lifestyle factors such as smoking. “Women likely will start to notice skin laxity in their 40s, but they may not want to undergo an invasive procedure to correct it,” she says. “Fortunately, there are noninvasive options ideally suited for women in this situation.”

According to Dr. Chapas, energy-based treatments such as microfocused ultrasound and radiofrequency microneedling can help improve skin laxity by promoting the production of collagen and elastin to create firmer skin. “Imagine wrapping your loose skin in shrink wrap to pull everything tighter — that’s the kind of effect these energy devices can have,” she says.

Dr. Chapas says filler injections also can improve skin laxity by replacing lost collagen and elastin. “If you picture your skin as a tablecloth, then you can think of fillers as a sturdier table for it to rest on,” she says.

Volume changes
In addition to losing collagen and elastin as they age, Dr. Chapas says, women also lose fat in areas like the face and hands, resulting in a loss of skin volume. As a result, she says, women in their 40s may experience sagging skin, as well as prominent bones and veins.

According to Dr. Chapas, noninvasive treatments with dermal fillers and energy devices can help restore lost volume in addition to improving skin laxity. These treatments also may be combined to provide the best possible results, she says.

In addition to seeking treatment for lost collagen, Dr. Chapas also recommends that women in their 40s take steps to preserve the collagen they still have. “It’s important to continue protecting your skin from the sun and the elements as you age,” she says, “and you also should consider incorporating topical growth factors and peptides into your skin care routine.”

Unwanted fat
Women in their 40s may have unwanted body bulges as the result of a slowing metabolism, pregnancy or other lifestyle changes, Dr. Chapas says. Even if women exercise regularly and are otherwise fit, she says, it may be difficult for them to eliminate fat in areas where the body is designed to store it, including the torso and the legs.
According to Dr. Chapas, women in their 40s who have isolated pockets of fat are ideal candidates for noninvasive body sculpting procedures like focused ultrasound, thermal energy treatment and cryolipolysis, all of which create areas of damaged fat that the body gradually removes. While these treatments can be performed anywhere on the body, the waistline and thighs are the most commonly treated areas, Dr. Chapas says, while the neck and bra spillover area are currently gaining popularity.

Dr. Chapas says interest in these body sculpting treatments has surged in recent years because the procedures are noninvasive, quick and effective, with little downtime for patients. Although liposuction remains the gold standard for fat removal, she says, other body sculpting procedures can provide subtle results for women who want to address problem areas without undergoing an invasive procedure.