



# 'Vampire Face-Lift' Uses Blood to Smooth Out Wrinkles

## Procedure Involves Injecting Patient's Own Blood Into the Face

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There's a new kind of [cosmetic procedure](#) available, and it doesn't require injecting any acids, fat or toxins into the body. The main ingredient in this [wrinkle-](#) removing procedure is a patient's own blood.

The technology is called Selphyl, and it involves injecting a mixture of blood products into the affected areas. It's also called the "vampire face-lift," although calling it a face-lift is not accurate. Selphyl is a nonsurgical procedure akin to filler injections, while a face-lift is the surgical repositioning of facial tissues that have become loose over time.

Dr. Andre Berger of the Rejuvalife Vitality Institute in Beverly Hills, Calif., said the procedure is becoming very popular.

"I think this whole recent theme in the entertainment industry ... of using vampire, Dracula themes, has definitely caused a lot of the interest out there," Berger said.

But today's bloodthirsty pop culture is just part of Selphyl's allure. Some of the more well-known [cosmetic fillers](#) -- Juvederm, Restylane and Perlane -- are artificial. There are also collagen fillers and fillers that use parts of a person's own body, such as fat fillers and Selphyl.

"What's nice about [Selphyl] is you're only using that person's blood," said Dr. Susan Stevens Tanne, a cosmetic and laser surgeon at Cosmetic Laser MD in New Jersey.

Selphyl is prepared by drawing a patient's blood, separating the platelets from the red blood cells, blending the platelets with a fibrin mixture and injecting it to the area a patient wants to augment.

"You overfill the area by 20 percent so that a person sees an approximation of the final results, but it's slightly bigger than it will actually be," said Tanne.

In about a day, the excess is gone, and several weeks later, the fibrin matrix builds up, yielding the final result.

Selphyl patient Lynn Piper is pleased with her results.

"I think the trick is to stay on top of it and tune up a little at a time," she said.

Selphyl lasts about 15 months, according to the company.

"It causes almost no bruising because it's a thin, watery liquid and there's no allergy testing required, since it's a person's own blood," said Tanne.

## 'Vampire Face-Lift' Isn't for Everyone

Selphyl isn't the solution for all wrinkles, though.

"You can't use it on a full face, because there's not enough product," Tanne said. "It's also better for volumizing areas or for more delicate lines."

She also said it's better for people with thin, "crepey" skin. Crepey skin is a natural consequence of aging and is characterized by loose folds and wrinkles.

The process by which Selphyl is injected as a facial filler is FDA approved, and it can be used on other parts of the body with wrinkles or decreased volume.

Tanne says it's very safe, but other doctors express more caution about Selphyl.

"Like any other idea or innovation, cautious people want to wait until the pendulum swings to make sure it's actually safe and the results are worth the time and expense to go through the procedure," said Dr. Malcolm Roth, director of plastic surgery at Maimonides Medical Center.

"Many of the current synthetic fillers on the market -- Restylane and Juvederm, for example -- with outstanding safety and efficacy data with millions of patients treated have one-year results or more," said Dr. Julius Few, director of the Few Institute and commissioner of cosmetic medicine for the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.

Roth also has some concerns about Selphyl's safety.

"One of the problems with your own blood is that some people pass out from having their blood taken," he said. "Also, blood tends to cause an itchy after-effect. Sometimes it causes burning or discoloration. You're injecting blood into a place where blood doesn't normally reside."

## Selphyl Part of a Growing Trend

The use of cosmetic fillers is on the rise, and there's a growing demand for procedures that are [noninvasive](#) and nonsurgical. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons predicts that the number of cosmetic procedures performed will exceed 55 million, which is quadruple the number done in 2005. The group also predicts that 97 percent of those procedures will be nonsurgical.

"Most of the products create instant gratification and can take five years off someone's appearance," said Tanne.

"[Injectables](#) have very little downtime and very little risk," said Roth. "They are also less expensive than plastic surgery, and in this economy, that's had a major impact."

## 'Vampire Face-Lift' by the Numbers

Selphyl costs somewhere in the range of \$1,100 to \$1,500 per injection, which is much cheaper than a face-lift.

New fillers like Selphyl are part of another growing trend as well.

"There are more products coming to market to address very specific issues, such as fillers doing even more for longer periods of time," said Few.

"This is an exciting time -- novel technology and the development of new and promising ways to preserve a healthy appearance," he said.

While he may not be completely sold on the benefits of Selphyl, Roth is at least intrigued by its nickname.

"Vampires are hot right now. That's a sexy name, so it works."

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