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Boomer guys turn to surgery to improve looks, prospects

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Kirk Brierley is injected with Botox by SpaMedica RPN Naomi Myhre.
Aaron Harris/Toronto Star

For years, Kirk Brierley had fretted over the loose skin under his chin, thinking it gave him a weak and sagging jawline and made him look old. It was particularly bothersome because he worked in the cosmetics industry where good looks reign and he appeared regularly on CityTV as a makeover expert. One day, while watching one of his television spots, he noticed his profile and balked.

"I had a bit of that turkey-neck thing going on," recalls Brierley, 50. "I felt . . . it was starting to give away my age whereas the rest of me wasn't."

So Brierley got busy. He researched all about neck-lifts and was surprised to find they were quite common among men looking for stronger jawlines.

He didn't know any such men personally, so he canvassed his female friends about their cosmetic-surgery stories.

It took him a couple more years to get up the nerve to go under the knife.

Once the incisions healed and the swelling subsided, he knew it was a decision well made.

"Going in, I didn't think I was lacking confidence when it came to my appearance," says Brierley, who maintains his \$10,000 look with occasional Botox injections to eliminate frown lines. "But now that I've had it done, I feel much more confident about putting my best face forward."

In the past few years, some Toronto cosmetic surgeons and dermatologists have noticed a sharp increase in the number of Bay Street men, ages 40 to 60 asking for non-surgical options, such as Botox , filler and laser-hair removal and more invasive procedures such as neck- and eyelid-lifts and rhinoplasty.

Even the marketing has changed, with brochures depicting greying, chiseled male Boomers.

Dr. Stephen Mulholland of SpaMedica, who performed Brierley's surgery, says when he opened his Yorkville practice in 1996 he did just one male facelift a year. Today, up to 30 per cent of his total of 120 facelifts a year are performed on men.

"Guys wait until things are looking pretty bad," he says. "They do it for what I call B&B — Boardroom and Bedroom. They do it in the boardroom to look confident and decisive. They have all these younger guys chirping at their heels, and with the downturn in the economy, they can't afford to look dowdy and droopy and saggy and not confident and forthwith. And then they get divorced and they're in their

50s, and they want to be snacking in their 30s. If you've got a waddle and a jowl and you're looking pretty shabby, that will often motivate them to do something to play up their appearance."

Toronto dermatologist Dr. Paul Cohen says men are ideal candidates for cosmetic procedures, because their skin is thicker, so there's less swelling and bruising than there is with delicate female skin.

Unlike women who jump into the experience well prepared and can cover up bruises with makeup, men are slower on the uptake and need more coaching and handholding.

Cohen says men often ease into cosmetic work through Botox, arriving at lunchtime or after work for a quick fix for frown lines and crow's feet.

Then they progress to injectable fillers of hyaluronic acid to plump cheeks and eliminate deeper lines.

Cost varies by patient and doctor, but averages from several hundred dollars for Botox to several thousand for filler.

Cohen says other popular, non-surgical treatments for men over 40 are fat-busting lasers to banish love handles and dermabrasion to remove acne scars.

For surgery, men look to improve their neck, chin and jawline and get rid of their love handles and "the 50-year-old male booby," Mulholland says.

Dr. Peter Adamson of Yorkville's Cumberland Clinic encourages his male patients to think carefully about why they want to change their body and ensure their expectations are realistic.

Then they have to commit to the process by "pulling the throttle back, making their work the recovery process, and putting it into their daily schedule and psychological schedule."

Mulholland agrees: "If it's about feeling fresh, confident and a little more vital, perhaps five to eight years younger in appearance, that's very achievable. But if it's to get to find you a 22-year-old trophy wife and get you the promotion to CEO, that's completely unrealistic."