



As Boomers Hit Their 60s, the Clock Takes on a New Face

Crow's-Feet and Cosmetic Changes: Keeping Up Appearances

Tina Alster, 47, a dermatologist and director of the Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery

Q Do 60-year-olds look differently or expect to look differently now than in the past?

A A 60-year-old now thinks differently than a 60-year-old did even 10 years ago and certainly 20 years ago. I think these changes we've been seeing in the cosmetic industry are very much driven by the aging baby boomer population.

Now you get people who are going into second careers and want to look good. Even people going into retirement want to look good.

I do believe, at the very least, everybody's gaining at least a decade. It can be as simple as changing the color of one's hair or the cut and style of one's hair. It can be the way someone dresses, maybe getting a different wardrobe, you know, dressing a little sassier. You do see that. Without being inappropriate.

My husband is going to be 60 in the fall, and he looks great. But a woman, if she hasn't done anything by that point, really starts looking old. And whereas my husband has some wrinkles, has some sun spots — but he doesn't have a paunch, and he still has a head of hair, so he actually looks young. Those two things for men, I think, are aging: the belly and the loss of the hair.

Women can't get away with even fine lines. I look at my husband and yes, he has more accentuated nasal labial folds and more crow's-feet. If I had those same things, I would look old. So it's interesting that men can get away with doing very little on that front, whereas women really have to pay attention to those fine lines.

Do boomers approach cosmetic dermatology differently than other age groups?

Boomers are different from their predecessors and are also

different from the generation beyond them. They know they can get it. They're willing to pay for it. What they're not realistic about is, they think they can just come in and do one thing and take away five decades of sin. They don't realize it's a process.

And there's still part of the idea, especially in Washington, that [cosmetic dermatology is] frivolous. There's still a bit of a hang-up if you've never had a cosmetic procedure before. Then once you get your head around it, and you know other people are doing it, [you think] "I'm going to do this for myself. It's a reward."

Whereas the younger ones, it's not even a reward. It's like turning on the TV to them. They don't have any hang-ups about it.

Physically, what happens to our appearance as we age?

Eighty percent of our aging comes from external forces, mainly in the form of ultraviolet light. Sunlight is major — number one.

As we get older, there is loss of elasticity in the skin. That will give you wrinkles. And genetically, some people are more programmed to droop. By

that, I mean saggy jowls, hooded eyelids, bags under the eyes. Some people don't have a genetic predisposition.

The foundation starts to crumble a bit. Everything just starts getting looser. People start getting more noticeable blood vessels around the nose.

If I am 60, can you make me look 25?

I could. I don't think that is a look that's necessarily appropriate or attractive. It's physically possible to make certain aspects of your skin look like a 20-year-old's. You can make someone's face look like a 20-year-old, pretty close. Neck and chest and hands are harder. If you see someone with a face that doesn't match their neck, chest and hands, you know they have had work done. They still look old. You can really rejuvenate. The problem is: How much do you want to spend?

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— Tina Alster, dermatologist