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Skin deep

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Manhattan's chicest women *love* her.

And why shouldn't they? She takes fat from a woman's saddlebags and uses it to fill wrinkles.



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She takes fat from a woman's saddlebags and uses it to fill wrinkles!

The procedure is not new; Dr. Patricia Wexler has been doing it for more than 20 years. But one look at her, carrying an enormous white Hermes Birkin bag around Cosmetic Boot Camp 2006 at the St. Regis in Aspen, and it's clear that she is the most fashionable dermatologist harvesting and injecting fat.

We caught up with Dr. Wexler to find out whether fat injections are still relevant, considering all the new injectable fillers on the market. Plus, she let us peek into her bag!

Age: 55

Practice: Dr. Wexler is an associate clinical professor for the Mount Sinai School of Medicine and has her own private cosmetic dermatology practice in Manhattan. She specializes in facial fat transplantation.

Her clients: Barbra Streisand, Stephanie Seymour, Candace Bushnell, Tory Burch, Natasha Richardson, Carolina Herrera and P. Diddy. *The New York Times* has called her "New York's best-known cosmetic dermatologist."

Why fat injections? "It can last three or four years or more," Wexler said. By comparison, other injectable fillers, like Restayln, last three or four months.

"Fat restores normal contours to the face, therefore restoring youth," Wexler said. It's the loss of volume in the face over time that creates an aged appearance.

Fat can be used to inflate hollow eyes, skeletalized brows, sunken cheeks, thin lips and nasolabial folds — those deep, vertical creases from the nose to the mouth. It can also plump up the mid face, conceal bulging lower eyelid fat pads and restore the youthful structure of the mouth.

Fat is harvested from the patient's body, usually from a woman's saddlebags, and injected under local anesthesia with sedation. "It's the ultimate recycling," Wexler said.

The process may require up to three sessions at three-month intervals. *New Beauty* magazine estimates the cost to be about \$1,200-\$3,500 per session depending on the number of treatment areas. Risks include infection and lumpiness.

Wexler says patients who receive fat injections "universally" report improvement in skin texture and pigmentation.

What Wexler's had done: She openly admits to having received Botox injections in her neck and between her eyebrows. "I require very little filling because I have a very full face. I don't starve myself."

What's in her white Hermes bag? Chanel Vitalumiere foundation; Max Factor Lash Perfection mascara: "It's the first mascara I've loved"; Serge Lutet powder; Shiseido lip pencils; and Stila eyeshadow. She's also a fan of the "lovely technology" used in SkinCeuticals products (www.skinceuticals.com).

She swears by: MMPi Skin Regenerating Serum from her product line, called Wexler. She uses it twice a day. Wexler products cost \$16 to \$65 and are available at Bath & Body Works.

Her approach to new technology: "I'm never the first on the block and I'm never the last," Wexler said of the host of new injectables, lasers and other anti-aging technology available. She typically waits six months after a new cosmeceutical or filler emerges before incorporating it into her practice.

Advice about injectable fillers: There's a phrase Wexler borrowed from a colleague that she repeats to patients and friends: "It's not the filler; it's the filler." A successful result is dependent on the skill of the person administering the product, she says. She encourages women to research their provider. Look for a doctor with a lot of experience and seek out good word-of-mouth recommendations.

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