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WHY I GOT 'EARTOX' TO FIX MY SAGGY EARLOBES

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IT'S A GROWING TREND THOUGHT TO BE CONNECTED TO OUR LOVE OF DAINTY EARRINGS AND MULTIPLE PIERCINGS. CHRISTA D'SOUZA TRIES A NEWLY POPULAR NON-SURGICAL TREATMENT

Earlobes. Do you ever find yourself surreptitiously checking other peoples' out? No, me neither, until last year. Now I find myself honing in on them in a most unseemly way. For comparison's sake, I mean. When did mine get so baggy? Who knew they could look so...old.

Check out the lobes of your 14-year-old daughter as opposed to your own, or have a look at a picture of yourself where they are on show from ten or 20 years ago and you'll see. Our earlobes, after all, age just like the rest of us (why wouldn't they?) and when I think of all the sun mine have been exposed to throughout their little lives, how I have so neglected them on the skincare front and generally treated them with such a lack of care and respect no wonder they suddenly...went to pot. Not only are they crisscrossed with lines and papery to the touch, but they sag. Meanwhile, because of all the dangly earrings I've worn since I had them pierced in Selfridges in 1974, my, er, holes are massive.

Cocktail-sausage-down-Oxford-Street massive, I'm talking here. No more tiny little diamond studs for me, then. They've got to be grape-sized, almost, in order not to go right through.

Oh dear, yet another body part to have a hang-up about, for the cosmetic industry to exploit. “Leave my lobes alone!” I hear you cry. But because they have become such a canvas for the multiple piercings us women of a certain postcode and age all seem to have, I cannot. Their aesthetic relevance, in my opinion, is in direct inverse proportion to our cleavage and knees as we age. By that I mean, as the surface area of skin we are willing to expose shrinks, ear lobes present themselves as a last bastion, the one locus of self-expression where, along with your fingernails maybe, you don’t have to “dress appropriately”. As such we need to tend them just like any other exposed body part. Did you know, by the way, that as we get older age our ears, like our noses, continue to grow?

The least drastic solution to my lobe issues are 'push-up bras' you can buy for your earlobes - plastic backings that artificially hike the skin up so that the piercing holes don't look stretched (Earlite sells 60 patches for £5.49). The most drastic is to get a lobuloplasty - a procedure which involves having two triangular chunks taken out of you the flappiest part of your lobes and then sewn back together under a local anaesthetic. It costs around £900 and is all the rage in Beverly Hills. If you are a fan of *Keeping Up With The Kardashians* you will have watched Kris Jenner having it done. For those of us a bit squeamish about the knife, though (i.e, me) there's a slightly less invasive alternative.

Luckily it is offered in London by Dr Suha Kersh, IMHO the best cosmetic doctor in the city and possibly the whole of the UK. Yup, my lobes could definitely do with some rejuvenation, she says as she peers at them through her magnifying glass. I'm not the only one seeking an earlobe makeover either, as Dr Kersh confirms:

“These treatments are becoming increasingly popular among middle-aged women in particular. Normally they're concerned about volume loss and dehydrated skin with a degree of laxity. This laxity of the ear lobe means that earrings no longer sit comfortably in the earring hole of the ear.



Christa's ears before

“It’s part of a growing trend whereby people are seeking help for ‘less traditional’ areas of their bodies that are showing signs of ageing such as hands, knees and elbows. There is now such a variety of non-surgical procedures from dermal

fillers to skin boosters to energy based treatments such as lasers, ultrasound and radiofrequency that help us achieve great results without surgery, so a wider variety of options are opening up to patients.

Though this particular treatment involves being injected with filler, it doesn't hurt nearly as much as when it is going into my face. Not surprisingly it's all about collagen, or the lack of it. They need to be reflat, as it were, to restore them to their youthful 'plumpicity' (Is there such a word? There ought to be). By injecting them into strategic points on both sides with Volift filler from the Juvederm range, the wrinkles will smooth out and, because the skin gets firmer and plumper, the piercing holes will decrease in size.

The treatment takes about ten minutes and I can barely feel a thing. The filler itself has anaesthetic in its composition allowing for a very comfortable experience, but if you're particularly sensitive a numbing cream could be used. Most often though you wouldn't require any form of anaesthesia. As for the effect, it's immediate. Though I mustn't wear earrings for at least another 24 hours (preferably a week) and I have to come back in six months for a top-up, although Dr Suha tells me that many patients go for a year without needing a follow-up as the longevity of the treatment and amount of filler used differs between patients. I've now got, in the words of Kris Jenner, "cute" lobes and the thought of that makes me feel 20 years younger.



Christa's ears

post-treatment

They used to say at school that the bigger your earlobes the better you were in bed, which is no doubt a theory connected to *The Naked Ape*, the famous book published

by anthropologist Desmond Morris in the 60s, which suggested that earlobes were developed as an added erogenous zone to facilitate the extended sexuality necessary for human pair bonding. Might there be a grain of truth in that?

Nobody, not one single person, has noticed my little “eartox”, but the knowledge, just like the feeling you have when you wear nice underwear, has given a renewed wiggle to my walk.

Prices from £650 at Dr Suha Kersh's 23md clinic