

**GONE ARE THE DAYS WHEN** cosmetic surgery and beautifying treatments for men were locker-room taboo; when waxy facelifts and dodgy wigs were the only rejuvenating options. The once-small scattering of chaps seeking solutions has evolved into a burgeoning demographic of opportunity for many leading aesthetic practitioners. And their varying problems are generally symptomatic of the same thing: the man-o-pause.

Also referred to as the 'andropause' – and originally, the 'mid-life crisis' – this is not so much a medical condition as a psycho-cultural one. Unlike menopausal women, whose oestrogen production can rapidly decline, man-o-pausal males lose testosterone very gradually. However, like their female contemporaries, they are becoming more and more aware of the ravages that ageing can have on their appearance.

Perhaps it's a side-effect of the reported spike in post-pandemic divorces – there's nothing like being back on the market to make you reappraise your looks – or maybe it's the influence of all those lockdown Zoom meetings, which allowed them to constantly inspect their own faces. Whatever, they're now as conscious of their skin tone and tightness as they once were of other signs of seniority, such as loss of libido, lack of energy and the emergence of pot bellies.

According to Dr Martin Galy, a specialist in bio-identical hormone treatments at the 23MD clinic, testosterone does have some part to play in this. Since men's levels naturally drop by about one per cent a year from the age of 30, he claims that roughly a fifth are left with 'too little' by the time they hit their forties.

As well as controlling blood-sugar and cholesterol levels, testosterone contributes to regulating muscle mass, depositing calcium in the bones and maintaining heart health; it also powers up men's drive, focus and libido. But because too few of them are properly informed about its decrease, they don't understand that they are simply undergoing a natural physiological change. Dr Galy's answer is to prescribe bio-identical hormones, in gel- or cream-based solutions that can be

absorbed through the skin and have a safer risk profile than chemical alternatives. 'After a few months, patients feel more like themselves again,' he reports. 'Suddenly, their bodies seem back in balance and their confidence is restored.'

Until they glance in the mirror, that is. 'People will often wake up and think: "I didn't look like that six months ago",' says Dr Dean Rhobaye, who began his career as a surgeon and has since become a specialist in non-surgical facial aesthetics. 'But it's not because they're going crazy; it's because humans age in spurts.' And since men undergo a very similar process to women in that respect, 'The same rules apply. Optimising one's facial structure and skin is key.'

*When you're losing muscle mass, it becomes harder to sculpt your pecs in the gym – that's why an increasing number of men are drawn to surgery*

While old-school men were frequently dismissive of aesthetic rejuvenation and reluctant to embrace it, Rhobaye has lately seen a dramatic shift in values. He claims that the 'man-up' approach to ageing holds less and less sway among a generation who care about what they wear or put on their skin – to the extent that 'we're often augmenting the chin or jawline to give a stronger, more masculine facial shape'. And if some affection for the 'silver fox' look lingers, it can still be improved: 'I always say that a man having wrinkles isn't bad; but by softening very deep wrinkles, we can wipe away the appearance of tiredness or anger, while preserving masculinity.'

But what about the weight? It creeps on, the waistline expands – and suddenly your jeans don't zip up like they used to. According to Dr Dev Patel of the Perfect Skin Solution clinic: 'Typically, men have more fibrous tissue, which can actually behave like scar tissue. So, when you use non-surgical methods – and you're trying to shrink everything down – men are a lot harder to treat, because there's more resistant fat.' New to his armoury is the

Emerald Laser by Erchonia, which aids circumferential fat loss while reducing visceral fat (the stuff that accumulates around your organs, leading to heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and even Alzheimer's). Patients spend 30 minutes flat-out on the treatment table, under a swirling green light whose rays penetrate the skin and perforate the fat cells beneath; and since this causes them to shrink rather than disappear, there's no risk of any side-effects. 'It's cleared by the regulatory authorities for BMIs of up to 40 – the latter is classified as morbid obesity – which means it can be a kickstart into healthier living for people who aren't eligible for other non-surgical procedures,' says Patel. He recommends a course of eight sessions over four to eight

weeks, but points out that 80 per cent of patients notice visible results after just one.

Then there's the dreaded flabby chest, a stealthily-growing yet significant addition to some middle-aged men. (Take the T-shirt test, guys: you'll know you have a problem if you're

starting to look busty.) When you're losing muscle mass, it becomes ever harder to sculpt your pecs in the gym; and that's why an increasing number of men are being drawn to surgical procedures. Just ask Raj Ragoowansi, one of Harley Street's leading breast surgeons. In recent years, he has seen a twofold increase in male patients; and in nine out of 10 cases, a consultation has led to surgery.

A growing number, he observes, arrive fresh from a mid-life breakup or lockdown-driven-weight gain. But with a combination of liposuction and skin removal, he can still make a sloppy joe look like Superman. (He avoids dramatic scarring by creating tiny incisions through the nipples' areolas.) And the results have a dramatic impact on clients' confidence: 'When prospective patients see before-and-after images of what is achievable, I have an almost 100 per cent conversion rate.'

The torso, then, can be transformed. But how about (and collectively, this is probably the greatest preoccupation among middle-aged males) what happens on our heads? Hair loss is mostly down to genetics – some shed their locks in their ▷