

Long Lasting Enhancer

Newcomer Aquamid has found its place in the market of volume enhancers and is filling lips, deep folds and skin depressions. **JODI THIESSEN** finds out what the process of application is.

Unlike other dermal fillers, Aquamid is long-lasting, a fact that many who want a more permanent solution to enhance their lips and smooth deep folds have welcomed.

Aquamid is a soft substance made up of polyacrylamide and water, in fact 97.5% of it is water, which gives it its volume and also a natural feel underneath the skin. With an encouraging safety profile and over ten years of polyacrylamide usage in Europe patients and doctors alike have found a place for this new generation filler.

Aquamid is a subdermal filler meaning it is placed deeper underneath the skin to lift any depressions. This allows it to be used successfully for cheek enhancement, chin enhancement, nose enhancement and of course lip enhancement, much like a solid implant does.

Because of this and due to its long-lasting effects, even though administered by injection, doctors are treating it with the respect of a surgical procedure such as a cheek or chin implant. This is to minimise complications and maximise patient satisfaction.

Sydney plastic surgeon Dr William Pouw explains: "I call Aquamid an implant that comes through the point of a needle."

The gel is injected in thin strings with a fine needle. There is usually no need for anaesthesia, however a topical anaesthetic cream will reduce any discomfort. Immediately following the injection, the area may show swelling for several hours or up to a few days, however the gel feels soft and natural under the skin. It is a sticky gel, which is very elastic that makes it suit the tissues. When the patient smiles or talks it moves along with the tissue on the inside.

One of the complications of any filler is infection. Actually infection is a risk anytime the skin is broken, even if with a tiny injection and regardless of whether product is being introduced. Aquamid has been studied extensively and all complications documented. Over many years of scrutiny it appears infection is the greatest complication of Aquamid although when administered correctly these are very rare. In Australia there have been two reported cases of infection since its introduction here over a year ago.

Gold Coast cosmetic surgeon Dr John Flynn says the reason it is treated with the respect of a surgical procedure is to reduce the possibility of infection and he hasn't had any adverse reactions arise in his practice: "Problems that have been encountered so far world wide really relate to the infections around the filler and the way to minimise risk is to make sure the skin is thoroughly cleansed before

the Aquamid is injected. It needs to be injected in the plane which is deep one and if you inject it too superficially it can be contaminated by germs on the skin and glands."

Sydney cosmetic surgeon Dr Fabian Baez agrees and explains how he uses Aquamid: "I have a different approach. I start with icing the area that I'm working with and then I do a nerve block or the appropriate anaesthesia. Using a sterile pack I clean the area very well. I do the treatment under sterile conditions then immediately after that I apply a coldpack, which minimises the bruising and swelling. The person will leave the clinic as if nothing has happened."

Patients are also routinely given antibiotics to further reduce the possibility of developing an infection. "We commonly put our patients on antibiotics for other

implant procedures and I think Aquamid needs to be treated with due respect and patients should take antibiotics," says Dr Flynn.

Sydney facial plastic surgeon Dr Michael Zacharia says careful screening of patients also reduces the rate of adverse reaction. "We avoid those people that have an active problem such as active acne, active cold sores etc.," says Dr Zacharia. "When people have had herpes in the past we also treat them with antiviral medications."

Once the safety of the patient is considered and the correct procedure carried out the next point to consider is getting the right result. Dr Zacharia explains: "You always want to under-inject rather than over-inject because the patient can always come back and have another injection."

Dr Flynn agrees: "It's advisable to counsel the patient and don't over correct. It's always better to get the patient back again and do it slowly. If you aren't sure about the volume, it's easy to put in one ampoule and allow the patient to get used to the shape over a month or two, then if they want more they can come back."

Over-correction isn't a problem if there are open lines of communication between the doctor and patient. "While I'm doing the injection the patient has a mirror so they can see what I'm doing and we agree along the way that that's what they want," says Dr Baez. "We can go little by little. I know what they want because I do a thorough consultation and then as I'm doing the treatment they can see what I'm doing and can tell me as it's happening."

For patients who want a more permanent solution to volume loss or just want to change the shape of the soft tissues of their face, Aquamid is providing a popular and simple solution. **ACSM**

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