

## Cosmetic Surgery

Ageing is an irreversible process – a fact of life. But there are ways to reduce its effect on our looks. There are today safe and reliable clinics providing cosmetic surgery. However, before undergoing any cosmetic treatment or operation, one should have a clear understanding of the effects and risks involved, and should make sure the operation is carried out by a professional.

Laser (a device that emits light in a concentrated narrow beam) is used in treating skin conditions. It can remove freckles, excessive blood vessels, tattoo and stimulate the production of collagen (a natural protein) in the skin. With its high energy, laser can treat different skin conditions effectively and fewer treatment sessions are needed. But it can also cause hyperpigmentation, a harmless condition in which patches of skin become darker in colour than the surrounding skin), seen in about 20-30 per cent of Asians after surgery.

Intense Pulsed Light (IPL), which consists of a spectrum of wavelengths, can also be used to improve skin damaged by sun, or impaired by age. As low energy is used, more treatment sessions are needed to achieve the desired result. Hyaluronic acid is a synthetic material used to correct wrinkles or to enhance one's lips, nose or breasts. This acid should be injected every 6-9 months after treatment. The injection is safe, and the chance of infection is low. However, it can cause tissue damage if injected into blood vessels.

Botox is also widely used in cosmetic surgery. It works by blocking the nerves that control the target muscles, resulting in a reduction in muscle tone. It can be used to reduce wrinkles around the eyes and forehead, to reduce the masseter muscle (main muscle used for chewing) of the lower jaw, and to make legs slim. The effect lasts between six and nine months.