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Expert Tips on Turning Back the Hands of Time

From Injections to Lasers, Dermatologists Discuss Options to Treat the Aging Hand

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WebMD Health News

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Aug. 5, 2011 -- Got time on your hands? You're not alone. No, we are not talking about having nothing to do, we are talking about age spots, sun spots, crepe-like texture, and other telltale signs of aging on your hands.

Our hands can be a dead giveaway of our real age, but dermatologists have a host of new treatments up their sleeves to add volume to hands and get rid of brown spots.

From injections of your own fat and other soft tissue fillers to laser hand rejuvenation, there are more treatments available today than ever before to treat the aging hand, says Dee Anna Glaser, MD, director of cosmetic and laser surgery at St. Louis University in St. Louis. She spoke to WebMD at the American Academy of Dermatology summer meeting in New York.

The focus on aging hands is somewhat of a natural progression, she says. "We spent time on our face, neck, chest, and now we are onto our hands [and] we have a lot of things at our disposal that are good options," Glaser says.

It's the final frontier, says Wendy Lewis, a New York City-based plastic surgery and skin care consultant and author of several books, including *Plastic Makes Perfect*. "Your face looks good, your neck looks good, your chest looks good, so our hands are the next extremities that show all the time and are subject to the most environmental abuse," she says. Plus "it's an area that is very difficult to cover up short of putting your hands in your pocket."

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Hand Fillers

Soft tissue fillers including hyaluronic acid-based injectables such as Juvederm, Perlane, and Restylane top Glaser's list of aging hand treatments.

Fat injections can also have a role in adding volume to thinning hands, but this is a two-step procedure and often results in more swelling than other injectables. Fat must first be extracted from areas of the body where it is plentiful and processed before it can be injected back into the back of your hands.

Other fillers provide instant gratification and the results last about a year, she says. There is some swelling with fillers, but most people can go back to using their hands within a day, she says. Treating both hands usually entails fewer syringes of fillers than treating volume loss in the face.

Glaser says that she often has to broach the topic with new patients. "They may complain about age spots, liver spots, and prominent veins on the back of their hands and that leads us to the subject of volume loss and fillers," she says.

She often suggests a combination of lasers to get rid of brown spots and fillers to treat hand atrophy.

Speaking of lasers, Michele Green, MD, a dermatologist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City, is a fan of rejuvenation with fractionated lasers, such as Fraxel. These treatments penetrate the surface of the skin without damaging the outer layer and help to spur collagen production. "For the first time we have a laser that can tone the skin," she says.

"More and more people are coming in for hand rejuvenation," Green says. "These are becoming very popular treatments."

But prevention is really the key, so if you are reading this article before your hands have started to show signs of aging, use sunscreen, Green says.

"There is no substitute for using sunscreen on your hands as well as the rest of your body throughout your life," she says.

"People who have the most beautiful skin are those who use sunscreen, she says. "When you put sunscreen on your face, rub the extra lotion on your hands.