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Thread Lift in Dermatology



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CHAPTER 15

Combination Procedures

Rashmi Sarkar, Damini Verma

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INTRODUCTION

Facial aging is a gradual and complex process that affects everyone. As we age, changes in the soft tissue (fat and muscle) and bone of the face lead to loss of skin elasticity, decreased collagen production, sagging soft tissues, and appearance of jowls, nasolabial folds, and overall facial laxity. Although, traditional surgical facelifts offer effective results, but are invasive, costly, and require significant recovery time. Noninvasive and minimally invasive treatment modalities are gaining popularity due to their reduced downtime, elimination of need for general anesthesia, lower risk, and natural-looking outcomes.[1] Among these, thread lifting has emerged as a popular choice for facial rejuvenation. However, combining thread lifts with other treatment modalities will lead to more harmonious and more natural looking facial rejuvenation as effectively and as safely as possible. It will enhance both short-term and long-term outcomes, giving patients more comprehensive and sustained results.

This chapter will explore the synergy between thread lifts and other treatment modalities such as injectables, lasers, radiofrequency (RF), and energy-based devices in achieving a harmonious facial rejuvenation.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THREAD LIFTS

Thread lifting is a minimally invasive procedure that has experienced a recent surge in popularity as interest in minimally invasive techniques for facial rejuvenation continues to grow. It carries several advantages over the traditional face lifts as it lifts the superficial musculoaponeurotic system (SMAS) to address facial ptosis by placing barbed sutures along the specific trajectories. It also stimulates collagen production in addition to providing an immediate lift that is characteristically seen in mid face and lower face. While thread lifts can offer impressive results, they are not a one-size-fits-all solution. Thread lifts can

be combined with other modalities to address multiple signs of aging, such as volume loss, textural irregularities, pigmentation, and wrinkles and provide a more harmonious facial rejuvenation.[2]

COMBINATION TREATMENTS WITH THREAD LIFTS

Threads and Fillers

It is believed that with age, deep fat pads of face atrophies and superficial fat tend to reposition or hypertrophy. Along with this, there is also bony remodeling and weakening of supporting ligaments. It leads to volume loss, particularly in areas such as the cheeks, temples, and under the eyes and fat redistribution and protrusion that are mainly seen submentally in the jowl, lateral nasolabial fold, and lateral nasolabial crease. Dermal fillers, such as hyaluronic acid (HA) or calcium hydroxylapatite, restore lost volume by filling hollow areas and enhancing facial contours. When combined with thread lifts, dermal fillers can complement the lifting effect by volumizing specific areas that cannot be addressed by threads alone.

Protocol

Threads are typically done first to lift and reposition the skin, reducing jowls and facial sagging. After the threads are placed, fillers are injected to restore volume in areas such as the cheeks, lips, and tear troughs. There can be a gap of 2–3 weeks between these two modalities. They can also be done in same sessions in two different areas of face; e.g., fillers in mid-face and threads in lower face.

Threads and Botulinum Toxin

Repetitive muscle contractions lead to dynamic wrinkles, such as crow's feet, frown lines, and forehead wrinkles. While thread lifts can reposition sagging skin, they are not designed to address dynamic wrinkles. This is where botulinum toxin comes in as by temporarily paralyzing the muscles responsible for these lines, it reduces the appearance of wrinkles, offering a smoother skin surface.

Protocol

- Botulinum toxin can be administered before or 2 weeks after thread lifts. Botox relaxes the muscles responsible for dynamic wrinkles, complementing the lifting effect of the threads.
- If a treatment involves using fillers, botulinum toxin, and threads in the same session, then we must be careful of using one modality in one area of face. For example, toxins can be used on upper face, fillers in midface, and threads in lower face. If we are planning to do threads first, then fillers can be done after a gap of 3–4 weeks **(Flowchart 1)**.[3]
- A generalized rule for injectables can be "Never inject at the same time in the same area and same plane".

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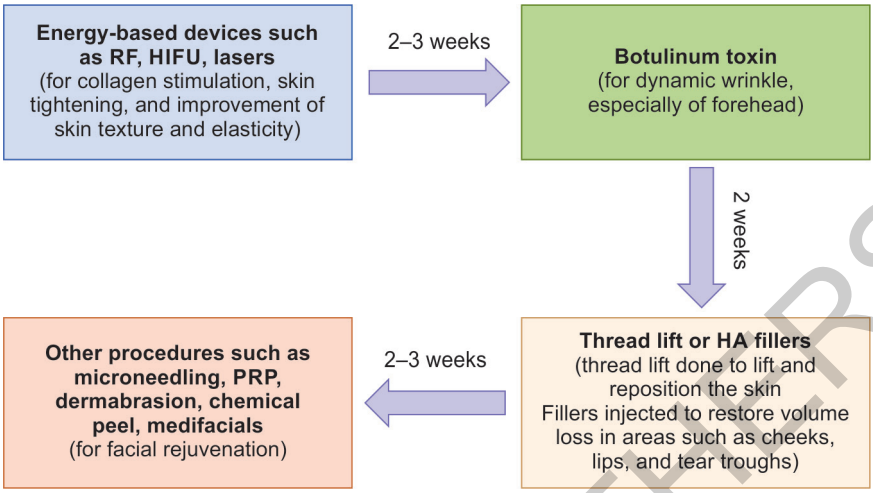

FLOWCHART 1: Flow of procedures for combination therapy for skin antiaging.
(HA: hyaluronic acid; HIFU: high-intensity focused ultrasound; PRP: platelet-rich plasma; RF: radiofrequency)

Threads and Radiofrequency

Radiofrequency treatment modalities, such as thermage, use energy to heat the deeper layers of the skin, stimulating collagen and elastin production. This results in skin tightening over time, improving skin texture and elasticity. Combining RF with thread lifts can enhance the lifting effect and prolong the longevity of the results by further tightening the skin and promoting collagen remodeling.[4]

Protocol

Radiofrequency should be done before to avoid unnecessary manipulation of the face when threads are placed as bruising or displacement of the products may occur if sequence is incorrect. Thread lift should be done after 2–3 weeks of RF therapy. RF should be avoided for at least 12–14 weeks after thread lift.

Threads and Laser Resurfacing

While thread lifts focus on lifting the underlying tissues, laser treatments such as fractional CO_2 or Erbium can address fine lines, hyperpigmentation, scars, and textural irregularities. Combining these two modalities allows for comprehensive facial rejuvenation, both at the skin's surface and deeper levels.

Protocol

Thread lift should be done after 2–3 weeks of completion of laser therapy. Laser should be avoided for at least 12–14 weeks after thread lift. Threads can be given in between sessions of laser hair reduction without any problem. After the threads, the next session should be scheduled after minimum 3 weeks.

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Threads and Ultrasound

Ultrasound energy devices like high-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) targets the deep dermis and the SMAS to stimulate collagen production and tighten the skin. It offers skin tightening similar to thread lifts but focuses on gradual collagen stimulation. When combined with thread lifting, ultrasound can prolong the lift by enhancing collagen support.

Protocol

Similar to other resurfacing and rejuvenating procedures, thread lift should be done after 2–3 weeks of ultrasound therapy. HIFU should be avoided for at least 12–14 weeks after thread lift.[4]

Threads and Other Modalities such as Microneedling, Platelet-rich Plasma, Dermabrasion, Chemical Peel, and Medifacials

Microneedling creates microinjuries in the skin, promoting collagen production and allowing better penetration of topical treatments like platelet-rich plasma (PRP). PRP uses the patient's own platelets to stimulate healing and collagen synthesis. Dermabrasion and chemical peels lead to facial rejuvenation by reducing skin surface irregularities, photodamage, and pigmentation. Medifacials also deal with pigmentation, signs of aging, and photodamage. Combining these modalities with threads enhances the overall rejuvenation by addressing both lifting and skin quality.

Protocol

There should be a gap of 2–3 weeks between thread lifts and other facial rejuvenating procedures **(Flowchart 1)**.

When performing combination treatments, it is essential to consider the patient's unique anatomy, skin type, and aging pattern. Educating the patient about the realistic outcomes, risks, and benefits of the recommended procedures ensures they make informed decisions and undergo the safest and most effective treatments. Tailoring the treatment plan for each individual ensures that the modalities work synergistically for a natural, harmonious outcome. Proper scheduling of treatments is also critical to avoid overlapping side effects and ensure optimal results.

CONCLUSION

Thread lifting, when combined with other modalities, offers a comprehensive approach to facial rejuvenation. Multiple types of antiaging treatments are required to address the various etiologies of facial aging. To enhance results, thread lifts can be combined with other treatments such as injectable fillers and neurotoxins, which help to restore facial volume and smooth fine lines. These treatments can also be complemented by laser resurfacing or chemical

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peels to address issues within the epidermis and superficial dermis. By utilizing a combination of these modalities, both clinicians and patients can benefit from the synergistic effects, addressing the various aspects of facial aging more comprehensively.

CLINICAL PEARL

Multiple antiaging treatment modalities such as fillers and neurotoxins can be combined with thread lift, as it offers a comprehensive approach to facial rejuvenation. They can also be done in same sessions in two different areas of face; e.g., botulinum in upper face, fillers in mid-face, and threads in lower face. It can be further combined with energy-based devices, laser resurfacing, or chemical peels to address facial aging more comprehensively.

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Thread Lift in Dermatology

Salient Features

- The book has a comprehensive overview of thread insertion, indications, and techniques.
- It has detailed guidelines on evaluating facial anatomy and skin quality.
- There is a step-by-step explanation of thread placement in upper, middle, and lower face.
- Precise vector mapping for different types of threads in different areas has been explained in detail.
- Clinical pearls to enhance safety and minimize discomfort during the procedure have been provided.
- In-depth discussion of thread materials and brands are available.
- Indications and advantages of mono, cog, and screw threads are mentioned.
- There is description of identification and prevention of common complications.
- Combining thread lifts with other aesthetic procedures is an important feature of this book.
- The book serves as an essential guide for dermatologists and plastic surgeons, offering a blend of theory, practical, and advanced expertise in thread lifts.

Indu Ballani MD is a pioneering dermatologist and aesthetic trainer with over a decade of experience, specializing in thread procedures. As the Director of Ballani Skin Aesthetics in New Delhi, she has trained 100s of dermatologists globally, hosted 100+ workshops, and contributed to numerous esteemed publications. She is a renowned faculty member at Dermacon and Cuticon and has represented India as a speaker at international platforms, including the Mint Summit in Korea and the International Aesthetics Conference. Dr Ballani has received multiple awards, including the Hall of Fame Award (ACAAD 2023), and has been involved in advisory roles for major dermatology brands. Her professional memberships include the Indian Academy of Dermatology and Venereology and the International Women's Dermatology Society. Alongside her professional work, she is an avid sports enthusiast, having won medals in cross-country and marathons.

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