

Plastic Surgery: Effects of aging conspire to create that tired-eyes look

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Plastic Surgery

My parents, and probably yours, taught the importance of being nice. Jesus said to turn the other cheek when someone is mean to you. Generally, I believe that to be true, although I think there should be some exceptions. One of them is when you repeatedly hear the words "you look so tired." It should be a legal move, morally and legally, to pop someone on the snoot for telling you that you look rotten. How does it enrich your existence, enhance your self-esteem, or in any way improve your day to hear that?

What makes us look tired? Simple answer: eyes. Certain eye changes, such as dark circles, puffiness and red eyes, can afflict those of all ages. But especially as we age, many of these changes hang around and can create a perpetual image of fatigue and, yes, age. As time passes, the skin and connective tissues around the eyes loosen, causing the eyebrows to droop, upper lid skin to hang, and the lower lids to sag and develop bags. The transition from hottie to hound dog is relentless and unfriendly.

Often, we have the impression as we age that there is getting to be too much skin on the upper lids. Often there is, but more and more plastic surgeons are realizing that drooping brows are a much a culprit as upper lid skin. If you are not sure, stand in front of the mirror and see if elevating your brows corrects the excess skin on your upper lids. Sometimes this combination of brow drooping and extra skin on the upper lid is enough to impair your ability to see (visual field impairment). An eye doctor can do tests to see if this is the case, and in some cases insurance will cover the costs of upper-lid (blepharoplasty) or brow (brow lift) surgery. There are several procedures for correcting droopy brows, either through directly lifting the forehead through an incision near the hairline, or doing a lift through an endoscope. Lids are corrected by removal of the excess skin through incisions on the lids that generally heal invisibly.

Lower lid bags reflect fat around the eye that is poking through the connective tissue holding the eyeball in place. Fat and excess skin can be removed through an incision just below the eyelashes, and again these usually heal well. Lower lid surgery carries more risk because the support to the lower lid can be weakened. Interestingly, lower-lid bags can be camouflaged by filling in those unsightly troughs with fillers such as Restylane and Radiesse, the stuff we use to fill in lines elsewhere on the face.

Drooping forehead and brow tissues can create an impression that a person is angry, in addition to, or separate from, that of being tired. I have worked with several people who aren't personally concerned with the way they look but have given up trying to convince others that they really feel fine. Ours is a world of appearances, like it or not, and I find it fascinating how the distribution of skin and fat in different parts of our bodies affects the perception of age, mental state, energy level and even character. Thus, in such a world, it would not look good to pop somebody on the snoot for telling you that you look old and tired. It might, however, feel good.

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