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What do you do when you feel your pout is less than pert? **Joanna Hall** decided to brave the needle and undergo a lip enhancement.

I have always felt a tad challenged in the lip fullness department, thanks mainly to an off-the-cuff comment made by an older cousin about my top lip being "a bit on the thin side" when I was 18. Before then, I'd never really paid attention to the size of my lips. Afterwards, however, I found myself occasionally observing other women's lips and experiencing tiny pangs of envy if they possessed the kind of sexy pout I didn't.

In the years that followed, I never felt compelled to do anything about it. I've seen too many photos of celebrities with unnaturally inflated lips. But a couple of things persuaded me to cross the line.

One was the appearance of a few tiny wrinkles extending from my top lip upwards. They're commonly known as "smoker's lines", but you don't need to have been a slave to ciggies for years to develop them.

### All in the genes

According to Sydney plastic surgeon Dr Mark Edinburg, changes in skin happen because of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. One of the latter is smoking. But extrinsic factors aside, a person's rate of ageing is predominantly genetically determined. If it's in your genes, you can develop smoker's lines without ever having taken a puff.

The second thing that persuaded me to do something was meeting Kathleen Hoskins. A registered nurse who works under Dr Edinburg at the Eden Institute of Plastic and Cosmetic Surgery in Sydney, her approach to non-surgical enhancement is conservative, and that includes lip jobs.

Hoskins decided that the solution to both of my lip issues was Restylane. A thick, clear gel made of hyaluronic acid (a natural substance found mainly in cartilage and also in skin), Restylane is a filler used to correct deep folds, wrinkles and smoker's lines, and it can also enhance the shape of lips and add fullness.

In one simple procedure, I could kill two birds with one stone: soften those smoker's lines, and add some volume to my top lip. I decided to go for it.

With the exception of my husband, nobody knew I was having the enhancement – I wanted to see if anyone would notice. The first thing Hoskins did was give me a dental block to numb me from just below the

nose down. Some people have the procedure without it, but I was nervous enough about the whole thing without worrying about the pain.

Then Hoskins began injecting Restylane into my smoker's lines. After the first one I breathed a sigh of relief. Aside from a little pressure, I didn't feel a thing.

### Pleasantly surprised

The procedure was a breeze. Restylane was injected into my upper lip near the cupid's bow, along my upper lip line and into the corners of my mouth. For balance, a little was also injected into a few spots on my lower lip. Just one millilitre of Restylane was used.

The entire procedure took less than 20 minutes, and when I looked in the mirror, I was pleasantly surprised, if horribly numb. Although I was a bit red and swollen, there was no significant bruising, and within 48 hours, the only side effects were a few tiny bruises at the injection sites. But the smoker's lines were much softer, and my top lip was subtly fuller – I was thrilled.

How long Restylane lasts depends on how your body metabolises it – it can be a few weeks or a few months on your first go. Therefore, repeat procedures are necessary, although over time they can be spaced out.

The first friend who saw me afterwards didn't spot anything different, at first. She commented on my bright red, glossy lipstick and was surprised to see me wearing such a strong colour. At closer inspection, however, she could see something was different, and when I told her what I'd done, she was impressed.

Lip enhancement isn't for everyone, but I was lucky to find a practitioner with a subtle approach. And while my pout is hardly in Angelina's league, dark lipsticks are back in my make-up bag and that makes me happy.

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### For more information

- For more information on lip enhancement, visit the Eden Institute at [www.edeninstitute.com.au](http://www.edeninstitute.com.au) or call (02) 8814 5800. One millilitre of Restylane costs around \$517.