“‘I just don’t look like I used to’ is one of the most common complaints I hear from patients. And this complaint isn’t confined to the over-50 crowd. People in their mid-to-late 20s can start to notice changes that make their faces look more aged.

What is different? Well, unfortunately the first thing to go is the very focal point of the human face: the eyes. Age-related changes in the eyelids and structures around them, like the brows and cheeks, can happen as early as in the late 20s and tend to get progressively worse with time. That’s the bad news. The good news is that over the past 15 to 20 years there has been a relative explosion in facial plastic surgery in the number of both surgical and non-surgical options available to treat aging around the eyes, including the brows and cheeks. This means doctors can now achieve
much more natural, complete improvement in the way the overall face looks. We now also have many more things to offer patients with earlier signs of aging who may not be candidates for traditional plastic surgery just yet.

So here is a short primer on what happens around the eyes as we age, and some of the treatment options available:

**Problem: Drooping brow, frown lines, forehead creases.** With time, gravity causes the eyebrow tissue to drift down and sag. We may develop creases in our foreheads that run horizontally across the forehead from subconsciously trying to elevate our brows in the fight against gravity. Years of frowning or focusing gives us “frown lines” that run vertically between the eyebrows.

**Surgical Treatment:** A brow lift alleviates all three problems: It elevates a drooping brow and softens both the horizontal and vertical creases. One major advance is that most surgeons are now capable of doing a brow lift with small incisions using cameras. This is called an “endoscopic browlift.”

**Non-surgical treatment:** Botox can be used to treat frown lines and forehead creases. It can even be used to elevate the brow slightly. Botox works by temporarily weakening muscles. Despite any fears you may have, it is extremely safe. Injectable fillers like Juvederm, Restylane, or Radiesse are substances that can be injected into the skin to fill in forehead wrinkles. Fillers can be used alone or in combination with Botox.

**Problem: Crow’s feet.** Crow’s feet are those lines on the sides of our eyes that are made worse by squinting.

**Surgical Treatment:** Crow’s feet can be softened by chemical peel, dermabrasion, or laser treatments.

**Non-surgical treatment:** Botox can be used to treat crow’s feet by temporarily weakening the squinting muscles.

**Problem: Wrinkled or puffy upper eyelids.** The upper eyelids develop excess skin and fat bags as we get older, which causes them to look puffy. An individual may have one or both of these problems. Sometimes patients also have a drooping brow as well (see above), making the upper eyelids look worse.

**Surgical Treatment:** To both tighten the skin and eliminate fat bags, an upper eyelid lift or “upper blepharoplasty” (blef-ah-row-plas-tee) is the only effective treatment. This is increasingly being done in the office as a quick outpatient procedure requiring only local anesthesia. The upper eyelid skin can also be tightened with laser or chemical peel.

**Non-surgical treatment:** There is no really effective non-surgical option to treat both wrinkled skin and fat in the upper eyelids.
Problem: Wrinkled lower eyelids or eyelids with “bags.” With age, some people begin to develop the proverbial “bags” under the eyes. The “bags” are actually little bulges of fat that protrude. We are not yet quite sure what causes these unsightly bulges of fat. Most doctors think that the bulges are fat are caused by weakening of a membrane around the eye as we age, and the fat bulges from the orbit much like a hernia. New studies with MRI have shown, however, that we may, in fact, develop new fat in this part of the eyelid. The skin of the lower eyelid can also become wrinkled or what doctors call “crepey” (like crepe paper).

Surgical Treatment: To both tighten the skin and eliminate fat bags, a lower eyelid lift or “lower blepharoplasty” (blef-ah-row-plas-tee) is an effective treatment. This procedure is also increasingly being done in the office as a quick outpatient procedure, requiring only local anesthesia. Chemical peel or laser may be used in combination with surgery to tighten the lower eyelid skin instead of surgically removing the excess skin. If the lower eyelid bags are small, and the eyes and cheeks have a more hollow look from fat loss (see “Sunken or hollow look to the lower eyelids or cheeks” below), you may be a better candidate for adding fat into the eyelids around the bags to “cover them up” rather than removing them with blepharoplasty. In general, doctors are becoming much more conservative, removing much less eyelid fat to avoid a hollow look.

Non-surgical treatment: There is no really effective non-surgical option to treat both wrinkled skin and fat in the lower eyelids. Soft tissue fillers like Juvederm and Restylane may be injected in people with small fat bulges around the eye to eliminate the look of bags by filling in the tissue around them.

Problem: Sunken or hollow look to the lower eyelids or cheeks. One of the newest, and I think most important, developments in facial plastic surgery is the recognition that facial fat loss is a major factor in facial aging. As we age, we lose our eye and cheek “baby” fat. We become skeletonized, and the face looks more sunken overall (see picture). One very apt analogy I have heard is that the face goes from being a plump grape to a shriveled raisin with advancing age.

Surgical Treatment: Hollowness around the eyes and in the cheeks can be very naturally remedied using microfat transfer. In this procedure, fat is harvested from the abdomen or thighs via liposuction, processed, and reinjected using cannulas or needles into areas where fat is lost in the face with aging. The fat quickly develops a blood supply and survives long-term. The fat is used to give a more rested look to the lower eyelids and plump up cheeks that have lost their youthful fullness. Fat can be used to correct prior blepharoplasty in which too much fat was removed. The fat can also be used to fill facial lines and folds like smile lines. The benefit of fat is that it is your own natural tissue, the procedure can be done scarlessly, and is essentially permanent. Another option to correct the loss of facial fat is to place cheek implants.

Non-surgical treatment: Soft tissue fillers like Juvederm, Radiesse, Restylane, or Sculptra can also be used to fill around the eyes and plump up the cheeks much in the same way fat is used. (See picture.) These non-surgical treatments can be done in the office with ice and some topical anesthetic cream with little to no downtime. These treatments are universally temporary but can last up to two years.

Problem: Sagging cheeks, hollow look under the eyes. In some people, loss of cheek fat is less of a problem. They may have retained a lot of their facial fat, but the cheek fat they have retained starts to sag or droop. This also makes the lower eyelid look worse because in youth, the lower eyelid and cheek blend into one. As we age, drooping of the cheek can leave the lower eyelid without padding, again causing a hollow look.

Surgical Treatment: A cheek lift (see picture) can lift a sagging or drooping cheek, making both the lower eyelid and cheek region appear more youthful. This procedure can be done endoscopically, using small incisions and cameras, much like a brow lift. The

[Continued on page 66]
technical term is an “endoscopic midface lift.” It can be done at the same time the brow is lifted and may be combined with an upper and lower eyelid lift or microfat injections to attain maximal improvement in the area around the eyes.

Some of the very earliest signs of aging in the human face occur around our most important feature; our eyes. Aging in this complex anatomic area can involve changes in the brow, eyelids, and cheeks. A number of new treatment options for these areas, including microfat grafting, facial fillers, and endoscopic surgery, have evolved over the last 15 to 20 years, revolutionizing facial cosmetic surgery.

The development of these procedures benefits patients in many ways. First, it opens treatment to the younger patient who has earlier signs of aging that cannot necessarily be corrected with a traditional eye or face lift. Second, the use allows the treatment of a number of problems in facial aging not possible before (e.g. facial fat loss). Last, much more balanced, natural changes in the face can now be obtained with facial surgery because we have treatments for every region of the face: the forehead, eyelids, cheeks, and lower face/neck. In someone with facial aging in all areas, multiple procedures can be combined, which can be used to make the face appear more youthful as a whole and achieve complete facial rejuvenation.

AGE AROUND THE EYES?
(Continued from page 20)

CORRECTION
In our October issue, featuring personal trainers Long Island Image inadvertently switched the pictures of Stephanie Balabanick, a/k/a Essential Bodyworks, who can be reached at (631) 793-1117, and Karen Siegel, personal trainer, who can be reached at (516) 835-0086.

Here are the correct pictures:

KAREN SIEGEL  STEPHANIE BALabanick