

Destination FITNESS

Aging can be a pain in the neck

• But less-invasive options are being developed to tackle that sagging skin around your throat.

By CATHERINE ST. LOUIS
New York Times

Necks don't lie. Sagging there betrays age like the rings on a tree, and now-common Botox and fillers in the face make neck imperfections stand out in stark relief. In her 2006 bestseller, "I Feel Bad About My Neck," Nora Ephron, then 65 and a resolved turtleneck wearer, raged against the injustice of having no remedy for her slackening throat skin, short of surgery.

But it turns out that isn't true. These days, less-invasive options exist to improve the appearance of one's neck, provided it isn't a full-blown turkey wattle.

Like a romance, a neck can go wrong in many ways. Weight gain or genetics might lead to a double chin. Loose skin can be compounded by underlying lax muscle. A neck-lift (on its own or with a face lift) remains the best bet for a striking, lasting fix.

But careful liposuctioning of excess fat can also help streamline the full-necked, especially those who still have relatively youthful elastic skin that can bounce back after the procedure. The trick is not to get suctioned to the point of looking skeletal — and watch for underlying loose bands of muscle, which will become more obvious afterward.

If the issue is these isolated bands, injecting Botox into the neck muscle can make them less conspicuous in a patient with great skin tone, said Dr. Rod Rohrich, chairman of the plastic surgery department at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. But the fix lasts only three to four months.

Promoted on "The Rachael Ray Show," Ulthera is a new skin-lifting procedure that uses focused ultrasound to spur collagen growth deep under the epidermis. A single treatment might improve the contours of under-chin laxity in patients about 40 to 55 years old who feel they aren't ready for surgery or are not amenable to it, several doctors said, including Dr. Matthew White, a facial plastic surgeon at NYU Langone Medical Center in New York.

The Ulthera handpiece pressed to a patient's skin allows doctors to see underlying layers on a screen (as with gynecological ultrasounds) before they start the treatment, a first for noninvasive dermatological procedures.

"We deposit energy to a precise depth below the surface of the skin without affecting the intervening tissue," said Matthew Likens, chief executive of Ulthera, the Arizona company behind it.

Patients might feel pain during treatment. Prospective candidates should also be aware that peer-reviewed published studies have yet to quan-

Neck continues on E8 ▶



DAN NEVILLE • New York Times
Ulthera, so far approved for eyebrow lifts only, uses focused ultrasound to tighten skin, but its long-term effects are still being researched.



Photos by BETH PROBST

Fitness North Program Director Leif Anderson offered encouragement to Lori Schaeffer of St. Paul as they snowshoed along Oberg Mountain overlooking Lake Superior last month. Schaeffer said the program helped her realize that she could reach her fitness potential.

A live-in fitness program along Minnesota's scenic North Shore provides a new and obtainable health experience aimed at changing lives.

By BETH PROBST • Special to the Star Tribune

One snowshoe in front of another. Each step through this picturesque snow-covered forest is one step closer to the summit of Oberg Mountain near Grand Marais, Minn.

After more than an hour of pushing herself to the max, Lori Schaeffer paused to soak in the expansive view of Lake Superior framed against a bright blue sky. Seconds later, bellying encouragement came from behind. "We have to keep moving! Come on, let's go."

The moment is frozen in her memory. After all, this wasn't just any morning jaunt. It was one step closer to changing her life.

Schaeffer completed an intense, two-week live-in fitness and weight-loss program in Tofte, Minn., that's the first of its kind in the Midwest. Fitness North is an all-inclusive pro-



After a nearly five-hour workout, Shari Cummelin, Carrie Aho, Sue Bott and Lori Schaeffer prepared lunch together at the resort. It's meant to give them the tools to continue a healthy lifestyle at home.

gram that focuses on exercise — indoors and out — nutrition and lifestyle counseling, along with calorie-controlled meals that guests help prepare.

The program is even getting a high-profile boost: O'Neal Hampton of Richfield, who dropped from 389

pounds to 230 on "The Biggest Loser" last year, is a co-founder and co-owner.

"O'Nealisms" are posted throughout the facilities, inspiring guests to push themselves to the max. Fitness North Program Director Leif Anderson and trainer Jay Grove push participants as well, empowering them to go one step further.

"Anderson says the mind will give up before the body," said Schaeffer, who lives in St. Paul. "He's right. And every time I thought I couldn't possibly push myself any harder, he proved me wrong."

Anderson said Fitness North is all about changing lives. "This journey is about taking a small snapshot of your life, analyzing it and providing you a fitness, spiritual and emotional road map of what you can do to change your life. From there, it is up to you."

Fitness North continues on E2 ▶

The stars might not actually be aligned in your favor

By BILL WARD • billward@startribune.com

A recent Harris Poll found that 31 percent of Americans believe in astrology. They're wrong — although not necessarily in the way their detractors might cite.

The ancient Babylonians based zodiac signs on the constellation the sun was "in" on the day a person was born. During the ensuing millenniums, the moon's gravitational pull has made the Earth "wobble" around its axis, creating

about a one-month bump in the stars' alignment.

The result? "When [astrologers] say that the sun is in Pisces, it's really not in Pisces," said Parke Kunkle, a board member of the Minnesota Planetarium Society.

Indeed, most horoscope readers who consider themselves Pisces are actually Aquarians. So instead of being sensitive, humane and idealistic, they actually are friendly, loyal and

inventive.

Or not. There is no physical connection between constellations and personality traits, said Kunkle, who teaches astronomy at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. "Sure, we can connect harvest to the stars," he said. "But personality? No."

Astronomers have pooh-pooed astrology from the get-go, but Kunkle hedged when asked if astrology can bring people to his science.

"Historically, people looked at the sky to understand the world around us," he said. "But today I don't think people who are into astrology look at the sky very much."

But they do look at horoscopes. And now they have an explanation for why a day might not have turned out exactly as predicted. □

So just what sign should you be? E2

Destination fitness



Photos by BETH PROBST

Fitness North operates out of Surfside resort, with participants staying in townhouses that overlook Lake Superior. A morning workout perk is the spectacular sunrises that flood the main workout room.

◀ FITNESS FROM E1

The road map includes challenging guests physically with eight to nine hours of fitness per day through a blend of outdoor activities, cardio and aquatics. The goal isn't so much weight loss as it is pushing guests to their limit so they see what they are capable of accomplishing.

"I always thought I was in decent shape," said Sue Bott of Two Harbors, Minn., who was in Schaeffer's session. "Then I came here. I have never hurt so much in my life."

Bott's friend, Carrie Aho, also of Two Harbors, agreed. "By Day Two you are wondering how you will ever survive two weeks of this. But then something happens and suddenly it isn't so bad."

For these women, the attraction was proximity to their homes. "This is attainable," said Bott. "It is affordable and a location I could easily get to. This is a possibility for just

about anyone."

Participants live at and do their indoor workouts at Surfside resort on Lake Superior. Cost depends on accommodations. For example, a weeklong stay in a double-occupancy upper loft is \$1,500, private is \$1,800 and the lower-level master suite is \$2,100. The rate includes lodging, meals, a one-on-one health and wellness session with Hampton, the fitness and hiking program and a two-week follow-up program.

The idea for Fitness North actually began far from Minnesota.

Co-owner Cheryl Babbitt, who lives in Aitkin, Minn., said she never struggled with her weight growing up. But life threw her some curve balls and after struggling with post-pregnancy weight gain, divorce, genetic heart problems and depression, she knew it was time to make a change.

"I went to a fitness boot camp across the country," she explained. "I came back and thought, 'How great would it

MORE INFO

What: Fitness North, a live-in fitness and weight-loss program.

Where: Tofte, Minn.

Upcoming sessions: Winter: Feb. 27-March 13, Spring: One-week sessions beginning April 3 and 10; May 1, 8, 15.

Cost: Depending on accommodation chosen, \$1,500 to \$2,100 per week.

Website: www.fitnessnorth.net.

Phone: 1-218-927-2928.



Fitness North's Leif Anderson and Jay Grove push Phillip Lambert, from Chicago, to his max during a workout. Participants use the workout room and spa at Surfside resort, where they stay.

be to have a place like this in Minnesota?" And, what better place than along the North Shore?"

She put her thoughts to paper in 2009 and partnered with Surfside in 2010. "The Biggest Loser" show wasn't part of her plan until she saw Hampton and his daughter, SunShine, on the program.

"I was searching for a motivational speaker, so I contacted him. He loved the idea so much that he asked to be on staff," she said.

Hampton has helped raise the profile of Fitness North, but the program's unique location draws people from Minnesota and places as warm as Texas.

The main fitness room over-

looks Lake Superior, providing spectacular sunrises during morning workouts. Participants hike in the woods and along the jagged shoreline. In the winter, tennis shoes and hiking boots are replaced with snowshoes so participants still get an outdoor workout.

Regardless of what brings them, the outcome is the same:

Babbitt says participants are losing weight. "We have had a 100 percent success rate with all our guests losing weight and inches" in addition to overall lasting health benefits, she said.

A strong believer in fate, Shari Cummelin of Richfield became intrigued with Fitness North after meeting Hampton through a family connection. Like him, she knew she needed to take her life back. After completing the first two-week session she returned for a second one.

"Fitness North is the stepping stone to getting my life back," she said. "My life is worth that. And anyone who is trying to figure out whether they can make this happen, my advice is move heaven and Earth to get here. It will change your life. It is that important and your life is worth it."

Beth Probst is a freelance writer in Iron River, Wis.

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Astrology buffs should be using these dates, reflecting where the stars currently are aligned:

Capricorn: Jan. 20-Feb. 16.
Aquarius: Feb. 16-March 11.
Pisces: March 11-April 18.
Aries: April 18-May 13.
Taurus: May 13-June 21.
Gemini: June 21-July 20.
Cancer: July 20-Aug. 10.
Leo: Aug. 10-Sept. 16.
Virgo: Sept. 16-Oct. 30.
Libra: Oct. 30-Nov. 23.
Scorpio: Nov. 23-29.
Ophiuchus:* Nov. 29-Dec. 17.
Sagittarius: Dec. 17-Jan. 20.

* Discarded by the Babylonians because they wanted 12 signs per year.

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