

"This is the me I had imagined whenever I looked in the mirror," says Bailey, "the me I wanted to be."

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upfront

People

About FACE

Undeterred by bruises and bills, millions of Americans find outer beauty with plastic surgery

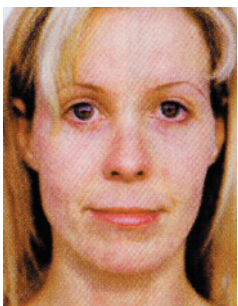
Shove over, Cher! Make room, Melanie! Average Americans, not only celebs or the super-rich, believing that looking good is a vital part of aging well, are putting their money where their (collagen-enhanced) mouths are. In 2001, 8.5 million procedures were performed in the U.S., up more than 300 percent from 1997. "Nobody wants to look old," says businessman Tom DeBonis, 56. "Some people never do anything about it—and some people go for it." Now he and others on the following pages are nipped, tucked and talking



Barbara Bailey

Getting her eyelids fixed helps a waitress lose the glowering look that kept people away

Ask Barbara Bailey what was so bad about living with droopy eyelids and she'll rattle off a list. For starters, "people perceived me as unapproachable," says Bailey, "because my eyelids made it look like I was angry a lot." Wearing eye makeup was near impossible, since the colors got smeared by her saggy skin, while looking in the mirror only became bearable after Bailey "developed a habit of raising my eyebrows," she says. "I was trying to see what I wanted to see, as opposed to what was there."



Before her eye-lift (top), "people thought I had a scowl," says Bailey

In September 2000, Bailey decided to reconcile the two visions. Having heard through a friend about Beverly Hills facial plastic surgeon Paul Nassif, Bailey, then 33, booked a consultation. "I thought she was in her mid-40s when I first saw her," says Dr. Nassif, who recommended a two-part approach. First, he gave her an endoscopic brow-lift, making three small incisions (later closed with staples) at Bailey's hairline so he could elevate her eyebrows.

About 11 weeks later, after the staples had been removed, Dr. Nassif snipped away the excess skin on her upper eyelids—a delicate procedure, since Bailey's right lid was fleshier than her left. "You have to be very precise," Dr. Nassif says, "or she'd be uneven."

Not to worry: Bailey was delighted with her eye work, which left her with only a small amount of swelling": and bruising that disappeared within a week. thanks to a combination of anti-inflammatories and ice packs. The following month Bailey returned to Dr. Nassif for a Botox injection between her eyebrows to smooth away a crease—and she plans to repeat the procedure when the effect (which lasts on average three to six months) wears off, as a way of preventing future wrinkles from forming. "It's always nice not to line your face if you don't have to," Bailey says.

Nine months later she went back for more, plumping up her lips with permanent implants of Atrium, a soft, rubbery material that permanently retains its shape. "It was a little more painful than I had anticipated," Bailey says of the procedure, "but the pain lasted just the first day."

The total tab for her surgeries was \$10,000, which Bailey, 35, who works as a cocktail waitress at Las Vegas's Mandalay Bay casino, admits "was a strain on the budget." But the gamble is already paying off. "I'm not sure if it's directly related to the change in my appearance or in my personality," Bailey says, "but my tips have gone up!"