



THE PONYTAIL FACE-LIFT

Is the world's easiest hairstyle the secret to a younger-looking face? Jessica Prince brushes up.

PONYTAILS HAVE ALWAYS been equated with youth. We wear them throughout our childhood, teen years, and 20s, then we reach a certain age and deem ourselves “too old.” Yet, ironically, when hair is pulled tight enough and high enough, “it can absolutely lift your face,” says celebrity hairstylist Harry Josh, who coifs ponytail devotees like Gwyneth and Gisele. So it’s no wonder that this sleek and simple updo has been a Hollywood favorite since the 1950s, and today it’s hard to scan a red carpet (Reese Witherspoon, Sandra Bullock, Blake Lively) or runway (Ralph Lauren and Bottega Veneta are fall’s standouts) without spotting swinging tails. This style standby has even captured the attention of facial plastic surgeons like New York’s Philip Miller, who created a much-buzzed-about facial procedure inspired by the ponytail’s youth-enhancing effects. “When a woman puts her hair into a high ponytail, she creates a centralized pull on the skin from the forehead to the cheekbones,” says Miller. “It’s the exact pull you would want to treat the sagging skin that begins to appear in your early 30s.” His ponytail lift aims to tighten the skin, lift the cheeks, and elevate the brow. Of course, with a good brush and a hair elastic, you can reap many of the same benefits. Read on for your age-defying options.

THE SURGERY While the traditional face-lift remains popular with the 55-plus crowd (the American Society of Plastic Surgeons reports that it was one of 2013’s top five surgical cosmetic procedures), Miller created the ponytail lift to fulfill the needs of younger patients. Like the hairstyle itself, the procedure (more like a micro lift) is best suited to women under 50 who are looking to combat the early signs of aging. “My patients told me that when they had their hair up, they looked great, but when they let it down, naturally they lost that lift,” he says. The minimally invasive surgery, which is performed under local anesthesia in about an hour, has immediate results. “You’ll not only see it, but you’ll feel it,” adds Miller, who claims that the procedure instantly

takes seven years off your face and that it can last from five to seven years. How it works: Incisions are made just above each ear and remain hidden along the hairline for one to two inches. The skin is then lifted from the underlying fat and fibrous tissues, and ligaments are cut to allow for repositioning of these layers. “If you just pull and trim the skin without addressing the tissues below, you end up with a windswept appearance,” explains Miller, and “the skin will stretch back out in a matter of weeks.” He says the trick is to smooth and pull these tissues and lay the skin back on top without any tension. The incisions are then closed, and the stitches removed five days later. “It was the best thing I’ve ever done,” says Nicole, a 38-year-old patient who had the procedure last fall and says she looks 10 years younger.

“I feel amazing—no one can believe how old I am.” Downtime is minimal, and side effects include minor swelling and bruising. Botox and fillers may still be necessary because this treatment targets sagging skin, not wrinkles, though Nicole says she hasn’t needed a thing since her surgery. “I couldn’t be happier,” she says. Cost: \$8,000–\$11,000.

THE HAIR TRICK A DIY ponytail placed just right will yield impressive results too, even if only for an evening. For a black-tie-worthy tail, update your kit with what hair pro Rod Ortega uses to create Blake Lively’s premiere ponytails: a paddle brush, Blax clear hair elastics, a flat iron, and a dry shampoo (we like Pantene Pro-V Original Fresh Dry Shampoo, \$6.99). Next, decide how you want the top of your crown to look—you can go ultrasleek, voluminous, or textured and still lift your cheekbones, brows, and forehead. That’s because when you pull your hair up, it should be gathered from the sides (start at the top of each ear), not the front. For long-lasting hold and precise placement, Josh advises tilting your head back 20 degrees and securing the elastic a few inches above your ears. When you bring your head forward, you’ll feel the pull. “It hurts,” warns Josh. Thankfully it’s just for the night. ■