



MAKEUP

Instant @cheekbones?

By Ann Ranard

The newest implant is billed as the face-lift of the 90s, but no one knows how the permanent plumper will stand the test of time.

These days almost every square inch of the face has its artificial counterpart, ranging from chin extenders to forehead enhancers. But no area of the face has more options than the cheeks. There are round implants, high ones, big ones, small ones. There's even an implant designed to create a baby face. But lately cheek-lifts seem to be raising a few eyebrows as well.

Most of the flap concerns the baby-cheek implant. Some surgeons claim that inserting the pliable, two-inch half-moons can serve as an alternative to a face-lift for people who are younger than 50—an appealing prospect since cheek jobs are far less expensive and traumatic than the skin-and-muscle-tightening rejuvenation procedure.

Unlike traditional cheek builders, which rest atop the bone, the submalar device is plunked down just under the bone in the cheek hollow. That way it can puff out the cheeks and make the face fuller, says William J. Binder, the California facial and reconstructive surgeon who created the implant. Binder considers sunken cheeks the hallmark of aging in the under-50 set. "People were coming into my office saying, 'I'm looking a little gaunt, a little haggard. I think I'm ready for a face-lift,'" he says.

On the strength of its ability to perk up sunken cheeks, the new plumper-upper was touted as the low-cost route to facial rejuvenation. Since its introduction 2½ years ago, the silicone device has earned its manufacturer, an upstart company called Implantech As-

sociates, number-one status in the field of facial implants.

"We started a massive marketing campaign on the Binder submalar," says Implantech's vice president, Byron



The submalar implant fills in for soft tissue that nature failed to provide.

Economidy. "Now it's the largest-selling facial implant in this country."

The company piqued surgeons' curiosity with widespread advertising, then followed up with teaching tapes and scientific studies sent free to interested doctors. Such an aggressive launch may be standard for breast implants, but it was unprecedented in the sleepy world of facial implants.

Another campaign targeted nonmedical members of the community, as pharmaceutical manufacturers marketing a new drug often do. Letters to the media implied that "the face-lift of the 90s" was a steal at "one-third to one-fourth the cost of a conventional face-lift." Similar messages have since turned up on local news

shows and in newspapers as well as in national magazines.

Today's implants are a cut above the buttons of silicone used in the 60s.

The Submalar Implant

The solid silicone Binder implant replicates the natural contours of the cheek: It is thickest in the middle, where soft tissue naturally forms the cheek.

How It Works
The scalloped upper edge fits just under the natural cheekbone.



LEFT, CENTER, COURTESY OF WILLIAM BINDER M.D. RIGHT; GERARDO