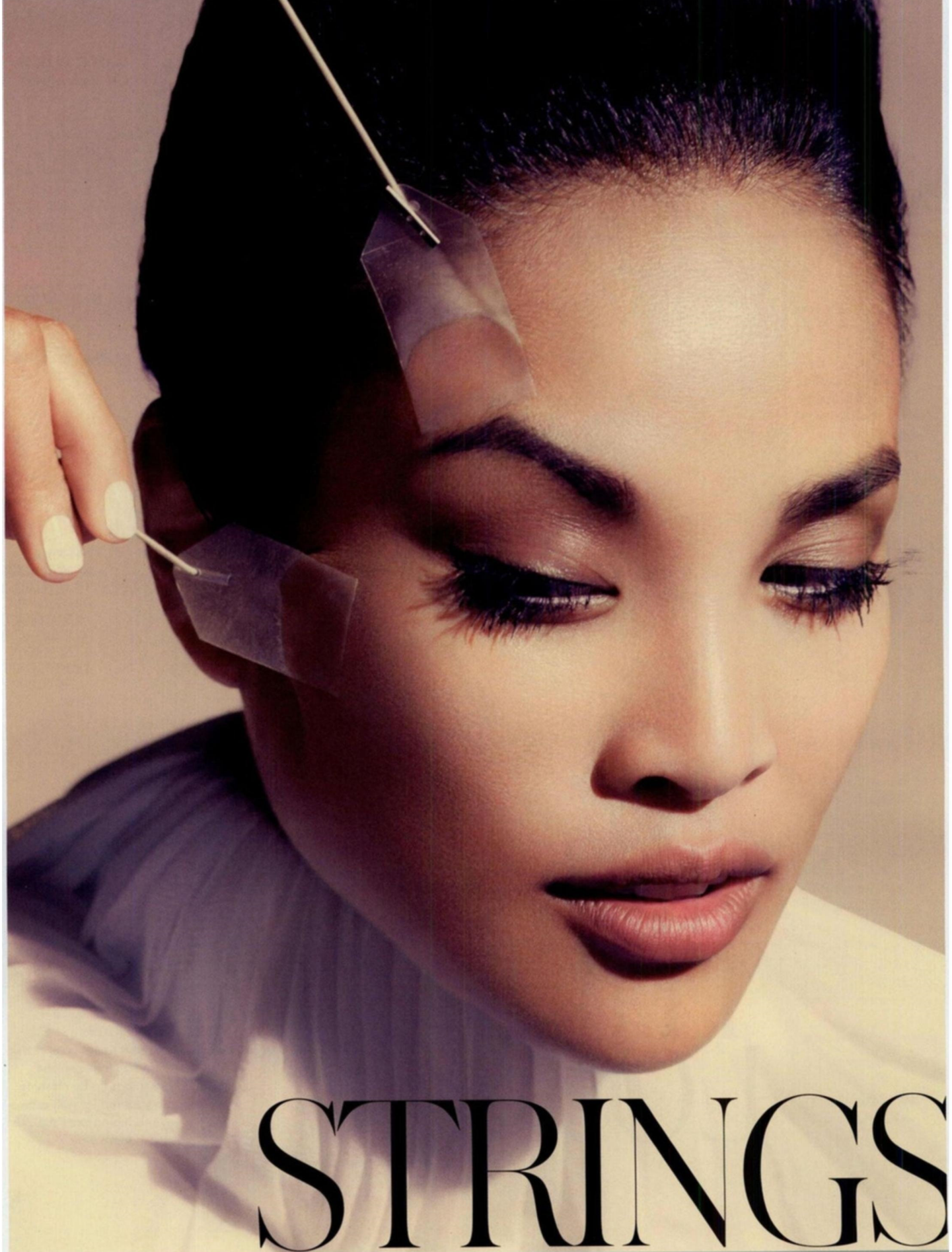


PULLING THE RIGHT



STRINGS

Stand in a room of people. Can you tell who has had cosmetic surgery? With new advances in treatments, it is nearly impossible to know – particularly when going under the knife is increasingly becoming a dated way to combat aging. The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons reported a 44% decline in female facelifts in 2017. Non-invasive and non-surgical procedures, however, are on the rise, with the Silhouette Soft lift now leading the way.

Thread lift treatments, which involve inserting a medical suture under the skin through an incision and pulling it out another, were once questionable. First popularized in the early 2000s, they had a resurgence when Gwyneth Paltrow detailed the process on her lifestyle website. At the time, the threads were still susceptible to breakage and difficult to remove. Side effects plagued patients, including infections, breakage and, for pale patients, a visible blue thread beneath the skin. Even those who achieved lifted skin saw their faces sag after a few months due to everyday mannerisms like smiling.

With time, techniques improved. The new Silhouette Soft is based on six years' research and involves suture suspension. "It's a non-surgical technique used to reposition the skin to contour and define the look of the face and neck," says Dr Victoria Manning, who teaches the procedure and treats patients from The Grace Belgravia in London. "We use the threads to reposition and add volume to the skin, leaving a more rejuvenated look," adds Dr Jaffer Khan, founder and medical director at Nova Clinic by Aesthetics.

Forget going under the knife – a non-invasive threading procedure offers a lunchtime lift

Words ALEXANDRA VENISON

Unlike thread lifting of the past, the components that make up Silhouette Soft are resorbable, biocompatible, and biodegradable. The material used in the procedure is created using polylactic acid and looks like a string of sugar – which it effectively is – studded with bidirectional cones. "It works by anchoring the skin using different technologies, either cones or barb sutures, which pass in one direction freely, and when pulled in the other direction, engage the dermis and cause a lifting effect," explains Dr Khan.

After holding the skin in place long enough for scar tissue to provide the lift, the thread dissolves. "It has dual lift and collagen regenerating effects," says Dr Manning. "By repositioning the tissues, Silhouette Soft then stimulates Type 1 collagen fibers, which are flexible and malleable, to provide a nuanced and natural looking result." The instant effect is a tighter and lifted silhouette. With sagging jowls eliminated, the patient's appearance is revitalized. One Dubai-based patient in her early fifties visited ZO Skin Centre to have eight threads inserted – across the upper cheekbones, lower cheekbones, jowls, and one on either

“We use the THREADS to reposition and add volume to the SKIN, leaving a more rejuvenated look”

side across her neck. "The results were immediate and I was extremely pleased," she says. "It's been a year since I had the procedure and the effect is still present." At her one-year checkup, her surgeon, Dr Francisco de Melo, recommended she have two more threads inserted at the jowl line to maintain the effect. "I will definitely continue to use this method to avoid surgery," she says, adding that the Silhouette Soft procedure continues to evolve with advances in thread technology.

There are also different forms of thread lifting for other areas of the body, including the bust and buttocks. The procedures are still in the very early phases and are only used when there is limited sagging, or alongside other procedures, such as liposuction.

As for the pain barometer, there is minimal discomfort. The procedure is only slightly invasive, as the threads are inserted through tiny incisions. "Despite very little bruising, I always advise patients that their face will feel a bit sore for a few days after the procedure but it's nothing that can't be managed with over-the-counter analgesia," says Dr Manning. "There is no scarring after the treatment, and it can be successfully used for all areas of the face and neck," adds Dr Khan.

Like with every cosmetic treatment, results can differ. "The outcome depends on the thickness of the skin, so we always recommend a consultation to ensure a person is the best candidate for the Silhouette Soft lift," explains Dr Khan. Describing the ideal cases, Dr Manning says, "We can start treating patients at an earlier age to prevent signs of aging. Patients start from their mid-30s and go up to mid-60s. What they share is mild skin sagging, jowls, and loss of contour and definition."

The Silhouette Soft lasts anywhere from six to 18 months, with results improving within the first three to four months due to the stimulation of collagen fibers. Dr Manning believes in managing expectations: "I always remind patients that we have sutures, not a magic wand. They are delighted with their results and usually come back before the effects wear off to repeat the procedure and perpetuate the results." Starting at AED3 500 per thread, with Dr Khan saying an average patient would require four threads. As results and techniques improve, and more doctors look to Silhouette Soft for its incomparable results, it is undoubtedly defining itself as the facelift of the future. □