

Women are going to crazy lengths to stop 'earlobe sag'

By Molly Shea

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Many New York ladies can't imagine life without their favorite diamond studs. But years of trendy statement earrings — and the pull of good old gravity — can stretch out earlobes and make it hard for the little suckers to shine.

Laurie, an Upper East Side resident in her 50s, says her ears have grown thin and lightly wrinkled over the years. Her piercings were so stretched that they couldn't hold anything other than a tiny hoop. "I had great ears before — not too big, not too small," she told *The Post*. "Now I have my grandmother's ears."

Her deflated lobes tanked her self-esteem — and seriously limited her jewelry options. "I stopped wearing [dangling] earrings," says Laurie, who declined to give her last name for privacy reasons. "I don't wear studs, because they'd look terrible . . . they'd hang forward. I'd find little dinky earrings instead."

So when friends tipped her off to ear fillers, which can plump lobes with a hyaluronic acid such as Restylane, she knew she had to try it.

Dr. Melissa Doft, an uptown plastic surgeon, says that the extra volume from the fillers gives earring posts more cushion, which helps studs stick out straight and allows diamonds to catch the light.

Doft is one of the pioneers of the popular procedure, and she says she stumbled upon the idea by chance. “As I was filling in [my patients’] cheeks, I started saving a little bit of filler and filling out their earlobes,” says Doft, who treated Laurie and her UES pals. Word spread, and soon she started seeing patients for just the ear fillers, which cost between \$600 and \$800, depending on the amount of filler used. “The response has been great,” she says. “There’s just something cuter and younger about it.”

Now, Doft estimates that she sees three to five ear patients per week at her Park Avenue office.

Unlike facial filler procedures, ear injections rarely go awry. There’s a small risk of hitting a blood vessel, which could prevent healthy cell turnover, “but you’re not going to lose your hearing,” says Doft.

There’s also no downtime post-treatment. “You can come in, have it done, and go to a luncheon afterward, or do a pilates class afterward.”

The treatment may seem like something invented to prey on insecurity, but Doft says having floppy earlobes can be surprisingly upsetting. In many cases, she says, her clients most miss wearing the earrings they’d received as mementos of important life events or gifts — a struggle that Doft says she identifies with personally, as she was given a beautiful pair of diamond studs as a “push present.”

“Every time I put on my diamonds, I think about that moment of becoming a mother for the first time,” she says. “[It’s upsetting] to think they’re just going to sit in a safe somewhere, that you don’t get to relive those memories.”

Droopy lobes can prevent patients from buying new earrings that they love, too. Jewelry store owner Alice Kwartler says she sees countless customers who would love to splurge on a pair of earrings, but know they won’t look good.

“It happens every day — women will say, ‘I love the earrings, but I don’t love the way they look in my ears,’” says Kwartler, who describes her customers as “the same kind of people that would shop at Barneys or Bergdorf’s.”

After getting her own ears filled a year and a half ago, Kwartler now sends her clients to Dr. Doft. They’ll usually come right back ready to shop.

“I have person after person saying they’re now wearing pieces they’ve had for years and [kept in drawers],” she says. “Or they go out and look for new jewelry.”

Laurie says she’ll be doing a little of both after getting her lobes filled at Doft’s offices.

“I’m going to go and relook in my little cubbies of earrings, and try on my beautiful earrings that I have,” she says. “This little tiny thing makes such a big difference.”