

BEFORE**BREAKTHROUGH:**

The doctor says Carey will have to undergo the procedure approximately every two years

AFTER

American air-hostess gets new face in city

In a first, cosmetic surgeon uses soluble filler to create facial bone structure

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IT is not uncommon for people to get filler (see box) injected in their faces to erase wrinkles and laugh lines, but using these fillers for bone correction is a different matter entirely. For American airhostess Melinda Carey, however, this proved to be the perfect solution.

Carey (43), a single mother who works for American Airlines, was concerned when she kept getting passed over for flights. "Surgery was not an option for me financially and practically," said Carey, who was recommended orthognatic (face correction) surgery for her asymmetrical right cheekbone and a laugh line that had created a deep furrow in her face. "I thought my career was over," she said.

Carey then contacted Dr Debraj Shome, head of aesthetic surgery at Apollo Hospital in Mumbai and, after flying down, opted for non-invasive surgery. "People shy away when you mention surgery. Carey was no different. It was then that we thought of injecting a thicker filler in her cheek to create the missing bone structure," said Shome. "I don't think this has ever been done

before. The filler should last at least 18 months and Carey was able to fly home just 48 hours after the filler was injected."

Surgery better

Other plastic surgeons in the city, however, view the new procedure with some skepticism. Dr Mohan Thomas, senior cosmetic consultant at Breach Candy hospital, said fillers are water-soluble and can drain fast depending on the patient's metabolism and reaction to the substance. "Surgery, on the other hand, is permanent. A face plate isn't going anywhere," he said.

FILLERS

The doctor used a filler on the lines of those sold under popular brand names such as Juvederm and Botox.

FRACTION OF THE COST

"The entire procedure cost her around Rs 35,000, which is next to nothing compared to the cost of surgery in the US," said Shome. Orthognatic surgery can cost up to \$20,000 (Rs 9.37 lakh) abroad.