

Instant lip plump from home? Experts warn against viral 'hyaluron pen'

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

From plumping glosses to enhancement tools, many young people are attempting to achieve fuller lips from home. But experts are warning against a new product trending on social media.

The hyaluronic acid pen, also called the hyaluron pen, has been marketed as an affordable, needle-less and painless alternative to lip fillers. It involves using the force from pressurized air to create microscopic holes and push hyaluronic acid filler into the skin.

Some users on TikTok have praised the pen for its quick and inexpensive results for a plumped, DIY lip filler appearance. But despite its popularity (with #hyaluronpen having over 69 million views on TikTok), medical and cosmetic experts warn that the device will not only create a botched appearance, but also is dangerous—so much so that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a statement condemning the product last year.

"The hyaluronic acid pen is a way for somebody that is not trained in fillers to use this device at home to get that filler appearance," says Rachel Yussim, a cosmetic nurse and provider with Persimmon. "But with that being said ... you're not supposed to use it at all. Nobody should."

How does the hyaluron pen work?

The hyaluron pen doesn't involve needles, nor does one actually inject themselves. It's a small, [handheld device](#) originally intended for diabetic patients to painlessly treat themselves with insulin throughout the day.

According to Uy Dam, a board-certified [nurse practitioner](#) in Boston, the device is easy to use. "You crank it up, then it builds a pressure inside the pen, so that when you add the hyaluronic acid into the cartridge and press a button, the entire pressure goes through a tiny hole and pierces through anything that's soft, like your lips," he says.

Yussim adds that hyaluronic acid is the same component used by professionals in injectable dermal fillers. Because it is hydrophilic, or

attracted to water, it helps retain moisture and water into the area for a temporary yet instantaneous swollen look.

However, because the device isn't FDA-approved or regulated, the quality and legitimacy of the hyaluronic acid is uncertain, according to Emily Sespaniak, an aesthetic nurse practitioner at San Francisco Plastic Surgery.

"We don't know exactly what's in there or what's being injected into the skin," she says. "Maybe you're getting [hyaluronic acid](#), maybe you're not. So you can imagine what kind of risks that can pose... especially for people that are immunocompromised or have other health conditions."

Should you use it?

Though the hyaluron pen may seem like a tempting alternative to pricey lip fillers, the viral product is unsafe to use, experts say, and is even banned in Canada and Europe.

Esthetically, this pen will likely not offer the desired look of a naturally full lip or a precise cupid's bow. Because the filler is only going into the upper layers of the skin, rather than deep into the dermis with needles, it will create a "swollen and uneven appearance that will create lumpiness and bumpiness throughout," Yussim says.

But more importantly from a medical perspective, it's can pose numerous health risks, such as inflammation, bacterial or fungal infections and even necrosis, or the death of tissues and cells. One of Dam's biggest concerns as a practitioner is that while you can control the volume of filler in the pen, you can't control the pressure or depth at which it pierces into the skin.

"It's dangerous because when you can't control how deep it goes into the

lips, you can't control how much or precisely where the filler goes. And if it gets into a blood vessel, it can actually block it and lead to vascular occlusion... where the blood in that area will be cut off and the piece of skin can die off," Dam says.

For those looking to enhance their lips, Sespaniak says the best option is to seek a medical professional for anything that involves adjusting your face,

"If you go to a medical office, they will have all the proper protocols to control any adverse reactions. But if you do it from home, you may not know what the warning signs are before it's too late," Sespaniak says.

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