

A Tampa physician wields radio waves instead of a knife to help his patients look a little younger.

NO SCALPEL REQUIRED



Tampa surgeon Jay Older uses an ultrafine wire electrode and special electrode tweezers to cut Christine Norausky's eyelid and remove fat.

By KURT LOFT
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TAMPA — Christine Norausky was feeling the weight of gravity after 49 years, so she decided to get zapped.

Norausky is one of a growing number of people who are changing the way they look — and feel — with a relatively quick and painless remedy for sagging flesh around the eyes.

"I have a family history of heavy eyelids," she says. "I woke up one morning and my eyelid was hanging over my lashes."

So the Tampa woman opted for a procedure called radiosurgery, a technique that replaces a scalpel with high-frequency radio waves. The waves act like a knife that cuts and cauterizes skin and muscle.

"The main reason I had the surgery is to take advantage of the technology," Norausky says. "I find it fascinating, and 24 hours later, I had difficulty remembering that I even had surgery. There was no discomfort at all."

Radiosurgery repairs eyelids and the skin around the eye diminished from aging, weakened muscle tone, fat

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Remedy originally designed for dentists.



BEFORE



AFTER

Tribune photos by JAY NOLAN

NO SCALPEL

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accumulation, disease or trauma. The outpatient procedure is deceptively simple.

A small, flat antenna is placed behind the patient's head, and the surgeon performs the work using special electrode tweezers that control the frequency of the radio waves, which come from the antenna. The resistance of the tissue to these waves causes water in the cells to heat up and sizzle, much like a cup of water in a microwave.

Maureen Smith, a Tampa nurse, says she felt no discomfort during or after her radiosurgery.

"It's painless, and I had minimal bruising and swelling," she says. "A day and a half later, I was back to my regular routine."

Jay Older, an oculoplastic surgeon with the Older and Slonim Eyelid Institute in Tampa, finds beauty in the precision. Older did the surgery on Norausky and Smith.

"There's very little collateral damage," he says, holding up the tweezers. "The advantage for the patient is there's less bleeding, hence less bruising and swelling. I don't use a knife. This is my cutting instrument."

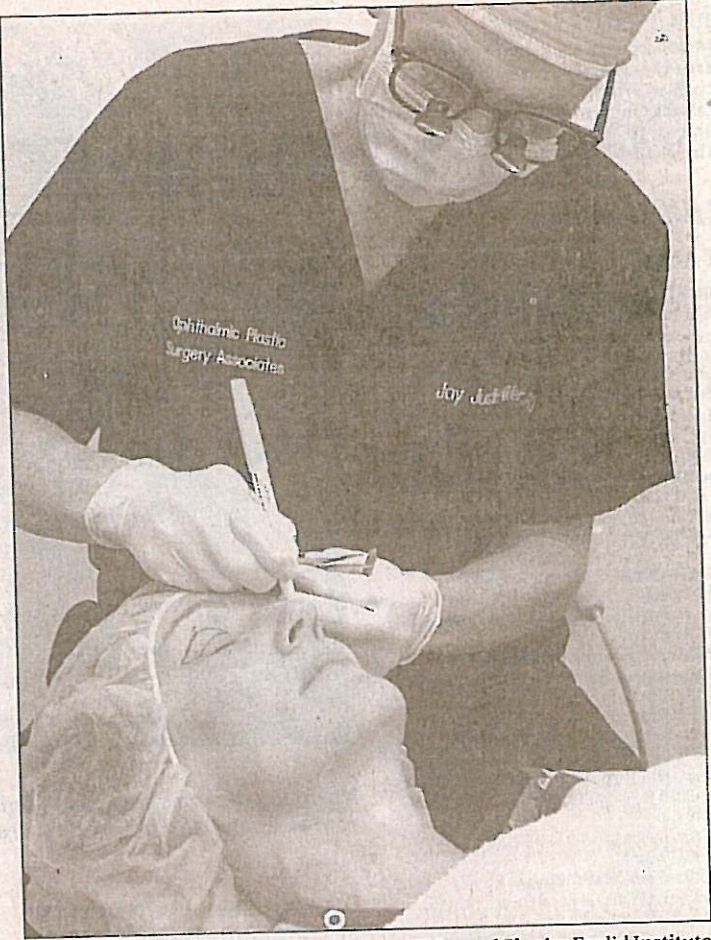
More and more, radiosurgery is becoming a technique of choice in blepharoplasty—surgery of the eyelids. For about \$4,500 for both eyes, the surgeon can remove unwanted skin, growths, tumors or wrinkles. Patients are given monitored anesthesia, and a vacuum tube held near the incision takes away traces of smoke from heated cells.

Older uses an ultrafine wire electrode that allows for light strokes at a low-power setting, which limits bleeding. The electrode has an extremely thin, insulated tip with only 1 millimeter of needle exposed. As a result, mucous and salivary glands can be removed without damaging the firm glandular structures around them.

The instrument is effective at blasting away fat cells—the cause of heavy upper and lower eyelids on many of his patients.

While radio waves are more precise than comparable laser incisions, Older says the disadvantages are the same as with most any cutting technique.

"You can go through the lid and cut eyeball, but you can do that with a knife, too," he says. "That's why no surgery is routine, because you can get complications from the



Photos from Older and Slonim Eyelid Institute

Surgeon Jay Older does drawings around the eyes before performing radiosurgery. For about \$4,500 for both eyes, the surgeon can remove unwanted skin, growths, tumors or wrinkles.

most benign thing."

Originally designed for dentists, radiosurgery makes up a small percentage of the nearly 9 million cosmetic plastic surgery procedures done in the United States last year, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. Those procedures rose from 6.6 million in 2002.

The top five cosmetic plastic surgery procedures are nose reshaping, liposuction, breast augmentation, eyelid surgery and facelift, and women make up 80 percent of the patient pool.

A large portion of men who undergo plastic surgery opt for hair transplants.

Although Ivy Roemig is only 27, she was embarrassed by the bags under her eyes. A saleswoman who lives in Long Island, N.Y., she heard

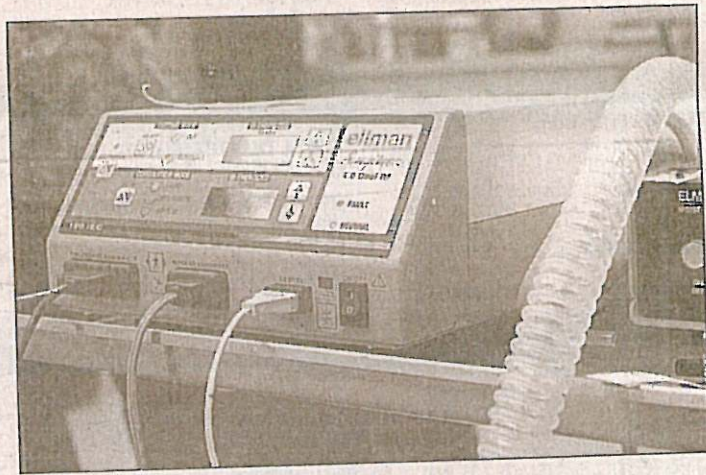
about Older's work in Tampa and recently flew down for the procedure at the eyelid institute on Fletcher Avenue.

"I was very unhappy with the puffiness underneath my eyes," Roemig says. "It was fat building up, and it looked like I was always tired. People would always comment on me looking tired, so I was self-conscious about it."

After her 90-minute outpatient surgery, Roemig says she looks her age—not like someone twice that.

"I'm very happy with it, and I felt great the next day," she says. "There was no scarring, because everything was done from the inside, even the stitches."

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The Ellman Unit produces high-frequency radio waves to remove tissue. Advantages include less bleeding and swelling.

Of course, you can never...
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