



Lower face rejuvenation: integration of lip lifting as an orofacial harmonization strategy

Rejuvenescimento do terço inferior da face: a integração do lip lifting como estratégia de harmonização orofacial

Rejuvenecimiento facial inferior: la integración del lifting labial como estrategia de armonización orofacial

Kledson Lopes Barbosa^{1,2}, Cíntia Mirela Rodrigues da Silva¹, Ellen Lucas de Barros¹, João Luiz Batista Valença¹, Ana Carolina Pereira Paulino³, Érica Alonso Coe⁴, Jana Carine Guimarães⁵.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To explore the effectiveness of lip lifting as a rejuvenation technique for the lower third of the face, integrated into the concept of orofacial harmonization, aiming to achieve natural and balanced aesthetic results. **Literature review:** These procedures demonstrated benefits such as improved labial contour definition, reduced interlabial distance, and natural, balanced outcomes. The Subnasal Bullhorn Lift shortens the distance between the nose and the upper lip, providing a more youthful appearance; the Corner Lift elevates the corners of the mouth, softening the expression of sadness; and the Italian Lip Lift offers a subtle projection of the upper lip. When performed by qualified professionals, these techniques present low complication rates and deliver long-lasting results, enhancing both the aesthetics and functionality of the perioral region. **Final considerations:** Lip lifting provides improvements in lip definition, reduction of interlabial length and smoothing of associated structures. The combination of these techniques allows for natural aesthetic results, respecting individual anatomy and promoting harmonious facial balance with low complication rates and long-lasting results, reinforcing the applicability of these techniques as a safe and effective option for facial rejuvenation.

Keywords: Lip lift, Subnasal bullhorn lift, Corner lift, Italian lip lift.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Explorar a eficácia do lifting labial como técnica de rejuvenescimento do terço inferior da face, integrado ao conceito de harmonização orofacial, visando atingir resultados estéticos naturais e equilibrados. **Revisão bibliográfica:** Esses procedimentos demonstraram benefícios como melhor definição do contorno labial, redução da distância interlabial e resultados naturais e equilibrados. O Subnasal Bullhorn Lift encurta a distância entre o nariz e o lábio superior, proporcionando uma aparência mais jovial; o Corner Lift eleva os cantos da boca, suavizando a expressão de tristeza; e o Italian Lip Lift oferece uma projeção sutil do lábio superior. Quando realizadas por profissionais qualificados, essas técnicas apresentam baixas taxas de complicações e proporcionam resultados duradouros, melhorando tanto a estética quanto a funcionalidade da região perioral. **Considerações finais:** O lifting labial proporciona melhorias na definição dos lábios, redução do comprimento interlabial e suavização das estruturas associadas. A combinação

¹ Facialis - Odontology and Orofacial Harmonization, Maceió – AL.

² Metropolitan College of Cariri – UNIFAMEC, Cariri – CE.

³ Ana Carolina Institute, Belo Horizonte – MG.

⁴ NUEX – Excellence nucleus in orofacial harmonization, Taubaté – SP.

⁵ JANADRAHOF Ltda, São Paulo – SP.

dessas técnicas permite resultados estéticos naturais, respeitando a anatomia individual e promovendo um equilíbrio facial harmonioso com baixas taxas de complicações e resultados duradouros, reforçando a aplicabilidade dessas técnicas como uma opção segura e eficaz para o rejuvenescimento facial.

Palavras-chave: Lip lifting labial, Lifting subnasal bullhorn, Lifting de cantos, Lifting labial Italiano.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Explorar la efectividad del lifting de labios como técnica de rejuvenecimiento del tercio inferior del rostro, integrado con el concepto de armonización orofacial, buscando lograr resultados estéticos naturales y equilibrados. **Revisión de la literatura:** Estos procedimientos han demostrado beneficios como una mejor definición del contorno de los labios, reducción de la distancia interlabial y resultados naturales y equilibrados. El Lifting Subnasal Bullhorn acorta la distancia entre la nariz y el labio superior, proporcionando una apariencia más juvenil; Corner Lift eleva las comisuras de la boca, suavizando la expresión de tristeza; y el Italian Lip Lift ofrece una sutil proyección del labio superior. Cuando son realizadas por profesionales calificados, estas técnicas tienen bajas tasas de complicaciones y brindan resultados duraderos, mejorando tanto la estética como la funcionalidad de la región perioral.

Consideraciones finales: El lifting labial proporciona mejora en la definición de los labios, reducción de la longitud interlabial y ablandamiento de las estructuras asociadas. La combinación de estas técnicas permite resultados estéticos naturales, respetando la anatomía individual y promoviendo un equilibrio facial armonioso con bajos índices de complicaciones y resultados duraderos, reforzando la aplicabilidad de estas técnicas como una opción segura y eficaz para el rejuvenecimiento facial.

Palabras clave: Lip lifting labial, Lifting subnasal bullhorn, Lifting de cantos, Lifting labial Italiano.

INTRODUCTION

Facial aging is a natural and progressive process that affects different areas of the face, including the lower third, which comprises the lips, chin, and mandibular contour. Over time, anatomical changes such as volume loss, muscle laxity, and alterations in facial proportions become more evident, resulting in an aged and unharmonious appearance (SWIFT A, et al., 2021). In this context, lip lifting emerges as an effective technique for rejuvenating the lower third of the face, promoting not only aesthetic correction but also the restoration of facial harmony (MONTGOMERY EA, et al., 2023). The search for aesthetic treatments that provide natural and long-lasting results has led professionals in the field of orofacial harmonization to explore techniques that respect the anatomical and cultural diversity of patients.

Recently, the focus has been on emphasizing the need for personalized aesthetic procedures, including lip lifting, to meet individual specificities and enhance patient satisfaction (BEIU C, et al., 2023). Moreover, the integration of lip lifting into the concept of orofacial harmonization enables a more comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach, considering the relationship between the different facial thirds. Innovative techniques are constantly being developed to deliver results that respect naturalness, symmetry, and facial proportion, meeting patient expectations as much as possible while considering the limitations of the technique (BARBOSA GA, 2020). Technological advancements have been a significant ally in this process, with tools such as 3D tomography and digital simulation enabling a detailed analysis of facial anatomy, which can be easily incorporated into the personalization of lip lifting.

This improvement allows for greater precision in results, minimizing risks and enhancing the safety of the procedure (MUHTAR MO, et al., 2025). Additionally, the age and ethnic diversity of the population requires an adaptive approach to the rejuvenation of the lower third of the face. It is well known that patients with different anatomical characteristics have distinct needs, which justifies the personalization of the technique according to their specific features. Lip lifting can be adjusted to meet the needs of both young individuals seeking to prevent aging and older individuals aiming to restore their facial youthfulness (SLEILATI F and CHALHOUB R, 2024).

Orofacial harmonization is not limited to aesthetics but also encompasses functionality. Therefore, procedures such as lip lifting should consider aspects like muscular balance and functional capacity, especially in individuals with unique facial patterns. This balance is essential to prevent artificial results and

promote a healthy and natural appearance (TALEI B and PEARLMAN SJ, 2022). Furthermore, the role of the orofacial harmonization professional is increasingly relevant in guiding the patient regarding the expectations and limitations of aesthetic procedures. Awareness of the risks and benefits is essential to ensure a safe and satisfactory experience (TEODORO RAA, et al., 2023).

Finally, with the increasing demand for non-invasive and minimally invasive treatments, liplifting stands out as an attractive option for facial rejuvenation. Its integration within the context of orofacial harmonization represents a significant advancement in the field of aesthetics, promoting the personalization and individualization of treatments (JALALABADI F, et al., 2023). In this sense, the objective of this study was to explore the effectiveness of lip lifting as a rejuvenation technique for the lower third of the face, integrated into the concept of orofacial harmonization, aiming to achieve natural and balanced aesthetic results.

BIBLIOFRAPHAL REVIEW

Traditional Approaches and Evolution of Techniques

Traditional liplifting techniques include subnasal incisions to shorten the nasal filter and increase the exposure of the lip vermillion. This initial approach was widely adopted due to its simplicity and effectiveness, but it had limitations, such as visible scars and unnatural results in some (RAPHAEL P, et al., 2014). Recent studies highlight improvements in the execution of these techniques, such as the use of suspension sutures and more discreet incision designs, providing more satisfactory aesthetic results and minimizing complications (MAHMOOD BJ, 2025). Additionally, advanced techniques, such as the bullhorn lift and corner lift, have been introduced to address specific issues, such as descending lip corners and lips with low projection. These approaches have proven effective in rejuvenating patients with moderate to advanced signs of aging in the lower third of the face (LI YK and RITZ M, 2018; VAN DER SLUIS N, et al., 2022).

One of the most significant advancements in lip lifting techniques is customization based on each patient's facial anatomy. Studies indicate that facial characteristics vary widely across different ethnicities, requiring specific adaptations in the surgical approach (SINGH P, et al., 2023). In patients of Asian descent, for example, the priority is preserving a natural and discreet appearance, while in patients of African descent, the focus is on maintaining lip volume and defining the contour (LEE DE, et al., 2015). The application of advanced technologies, such as three-dimensional facial analysis and digital planning, has also been integrated into the customization process. These tools allow surgeons to analyze facial proportions in detail, ensuring harmonious results that align with the patient's expectations (XIA X, et al., 2020).

Lip lifting has a significant impact on rejuvenating the lower third of the face, contributing not only to aesthetic improvements but also to greater self-confidence and satisfaction with one's overall appearance, promoting enhancements in facial symmetry while respecting natural proportions (JALALABADI F, et al., 2024). An important aspect of the success of lip lifting is managing patient expectations. A detailed preoperative evaluation and effective communication between the patient and the professional are essential for satisfactory and realistic results (ALNAMI R, et al., 2014).

Comparison of Different Liplifting Approaches in Terms of Effectiveness, Safety, and Patient Satisfaction

The most common approaches include the subnasal bullhorn lift and the corner lift, while the Italian lip lift is less common. The subnasal bullhorn lift is widely recognized as one of the most effective techniques for shortening the nasal philtrum and increasing vermillion exposure. This technique provides consistent results in patients with moderate to advanced signs of aging, especially in individuals with an elongated nasal philtrum (TALEI B, 2019). However, its effectiveness may be limited in elderly patients, those with dentofacial deformities, and unsatisfactory prostheses (BACHESK AB, 2023).

The corner lift focuses on elevating the corners of the lips and is particularly indicated for patients with depressed lip angles. Although less invasive, its effectiveness in creating a younger appearance depends on proper indication and is often used in combination with other techniques for more comprehensive results (PERKINS SW, 2007). The Italian lip lift uses two small, separate incisions, providing a discreet increase in

vermilion with a lower risk of visible scars. While effective in younger patients or those who prefer subtle results, it may not be the best choice for cases requiring more pronounced rejuvenation (SANTANCHÉ P, BONARRIGO C, 2004). In terms of safety, the most frequently reported complications include hypertrophic scars, infections, and lip asymmetries. Comparative studies indicate that the subnasal bullhorn lift has a slightly higher complication rate related to healing, due to the incision location and the tension applied during suturing.

On the other hand, the Italian lip lift is considered a safer technique in terms of healing, but may have limitations in terms of achieving more noticeable results (LI YK e RITZ M, 2018; TALEI B, 2019; SANTANCHÉ P and BONARRIGO C, 2004; GALDINO ARS, et al., 2022). The choice of technique also directly influences the risk of complications. Procedures performed on patients with thinner skin or a history of poor healing require greater caution, and the use of less invasive methods or the integration of adjunct treatments, such as CO₂ laser, is recommended to optimize results and prevent scarring (TALEI B, 2019). Patient satisfaction is one of the main indicators of success in lip lifting. Research suggests that the subnasal bullhorn lift leads in terms of satisfaction rates, especially among patients with more comprehensive rejuvenation needs. This is due to its ability to create visible changes without compromising natural facial proportions (JÚNIOR LCA, 2023).

The integration of personalization into the procedure has been key to increasing satisfaction rates. The use of digital tools, such as three-dimensional modeling and preoperative simulations, allows patients to visualize the expected results, aligning their expectations with the reality of the procedure (LEE TY, et al., 1999). The effectiveness and safety of lip lifting can be enhanced when combined with other aesthetic procedures, such as facial fillers, biostimulants, and facelifts. This integrated approach not only improves aesthetic outcomes but also offers greater flexibility to meet the individual needs of patients. Recent studies show that combining lip lifting with dermal fillers to correct asymmetries or enhance lip volume can significantly increase patient satisfaction, especially in cases of advanced aging (SERRATELLI D, et al., 2023).

Liplifting Techniques:

Subnasal Bullhorn Lift

The ideal length for the upper lip is approximately 20 mm, covering both the white lip region and the vermilion. The aesthetic proportion between the upper lip, the lower lip, and the chin should follow a 1:2 ratio. At rest, the female upper lip should expose about 4 mm of the incisal edge of the upper incisors. In men, the most harmonious appearance is when the upper lip almost completely covers the incisor teeth (MOMMAERTS MY, BLYTHE JN, 2016).

Figure 1 - Subnasal Bullhorn Lift. Surgical technique in the shape of a “bull's horn”.

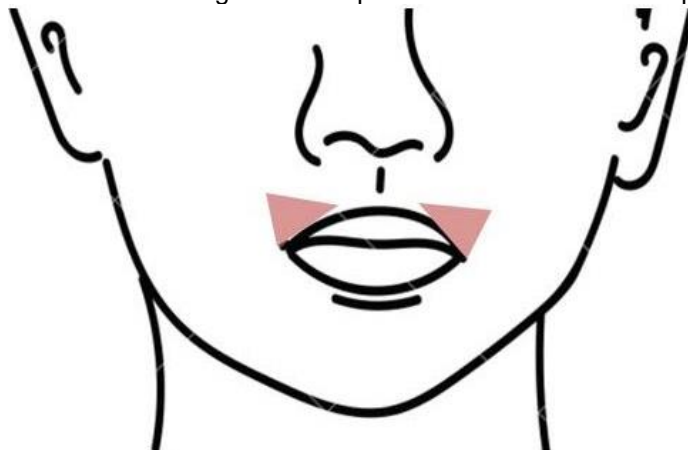


Note: Figure created using Canva software. **Source:** Barbosa KL, et al., 2025.

Corner Lifting

Indicated when there is a downward position of the lip corners, with an appearance of sadness or aging, and is complementary to other lip lifting techniques. Additionally, the Corner Lift is ideal for patients who present lip sagging at the corners without the need for adjustments to the nasal philtrum (JEONG TK, 2020).

Figure 2 - Corner Lift. Surgical technique for skin removal at the lip corners.



Note: Figure created using Canva software. **Source:** Barbosa KL, et al., 2025.

Italian Lip Lift

The indications include patients who require mild to moderate elevation of the upper lip and have aesthetic concerns related to visible scars, as the technique avoids central incisions. This technique may be chosen for patients who prefer more subtle results and are more concerned about the location of scars (SANTANCHÉ P, BONARRIGO C, 2004; JUNG JA, et al., 2019).

Figure 3 - Italian Lip Lift. Surgical technique involving skin removal through bilateral curved incisions, one on each side of the nasal philtrum.



Note: Figure created using Canva software. **Source:** Barbosa KL, et al., 2025.

Direct Lip lifting

Direct lip lifting is characterized by the removal of a skin flap along the lip edge, between the vermilion area and the white part of the lip. This technique aims to increase the exposure of the vermilion, providing a visual increase in lip volume and better contour definition. It is particularly indicated for patients with thin lips or retrusion of the vermilion due to aging. Although it offers immediate and permanent results, this approach may leave a visible scar along the lip contour, which requires careful evaluation of the patient's profile and

expectations (WESTON GW, et al., 2009; FAKIH-GOMEZ N, et al., 2023). The direct technique can also be applied to the lower lip, although its indication is less frequent. Direct lip lifting on the lower lip can be used in selected cases to correct asymmetries or improve lip proportion. However, the risks of inadequate healing should be discussed with the patient beforehand (NIAMTU J, 2019).

The differences between the direct and indirect techniques go beyond the location of the incisions. While direct lip lifting directly affects the lip and is more suitable for specific changes in lip contour, indirect lip lifting is ideal for repositioning the upper lip more broadly, preserving the integrity of the lip contour (MORAGAS JSM, et al., 2014). According to a study conducted by Arnold et al. 2021, the direct lip lifting technique has a good patient satisfaction rate, but patients who choose this technique tend to have greater concern about the visibility of scars. Planning with detailed photographic analysis and caliper measurements allows the surgeon to identify pre-existing asymmetries and establish patient expectations. The use of photographs from different angles helps create a three-dimensional plan, essential for achieving proportional and natural results (Zhao H, et al., 2023).

Figure 4 - Direct Lip lifting. Surgical technique involving the removal of a skin flap along the edge of the lip.



Note: Figure created using Canva software. **Source:** Barbosa KL, et al., 2025.

Table 1 – Main Differences and Indications of Lip Lifting Techniques.

Technique	Incision site	Main objective	Key indications	Advantages	Disadvantages
Subnasal Bullhorn (Indirect Lip Lifting)	Below the nose	Shorten the philtrum and increase the vermilion	Long nasal philtrum; limited vermilion exposure	Striking and rapid results	Potentially visible scar
Corner Lifting (Mouth Corner Lift)	Mouth corners	Lift the corners of the lip	Appearance of sadness or sagging at the corners	Result targeted at the corners	Limited impact on the vermilion
Italian Lip Lift	Sides of the nasal philtrum	Elevation without central incisions	Patients with a need for subtle adjustments	Discrete scars	More subtle results
Direct Lip Lifting	Lip edge (between the vermilion and the white part of the lip)			Predictable and immediate results; Precise lip contour definition; Simple technique, performed under anesthesia	Scarring may be visible, depending on skin type and healing; Risk of changes in lip sensitivity; Contraindicated for patients with a predisposition to keloids

Source: Barbosa KL, et al., 2025; data extracted from: Santanché P e Bonarrigo C, 2004; Li YK e Ritz M, 2018; Jung JA, et al., 2019; Talei B, 2019; Galdino ARS, et al., 2022; Niamtu J (2019).

Examining the Influence of Lip Lifting on Facial Symmetry, Proportion, and Overall Aesthetics

Facial symmetry is widely recognized as an essential element in the perception of beauty and attractiveness (RODHES G, et al., 1998). Lip lifting can correct lip asymmetries caused by genetic factors, aging, or trauma (CARDIM VLN, et al., 2011). Techniques such as the subnasal bullhorn lift have proven effective in improving the symmetry of the upper lips by allowing precise adjustments to the height and contour of the lip. Additionally, lip lifting procedures often reduce the disproportion between the upper and lower lips, balancing the aesthetic relationship between the two (O'DANIEL TG, 2022).

Lip lifting has a significant influence on facial proportions, especially by shortening the nasal philtrum and increasing the exposure of the vermilion. Recent studies suggest that the ideal balance between the length of the nasal philtrum and the height of the upper lip is crucial for a youthful and attractive appearance (HASIBUAN LY, et al., 2023).

The subnasal technique allows for adjusting these proportions, resulting in a more aesthetic alignment between the lower third and the middle third of the face. Lip lifting also influences the overall aesthetic perception of the face by providing a more rejuvenated and harmonious appearance. By improving the definition of the upper lip and correcting disproportions, the procedure can positively alter the way the face is perceived. Shortening the nasal philtrum can reverse signs of aging by restoring facial features associated with youth (JÚNIOR CSV, et al., 2023).

Additionally, lip lifting can create a visual effect of correcting the vertical disproportion of the lower face caused by the aging process or bone resorption after orthognathic surgery or procedures. This improvement is especially noticeable in patients with an elongated philtrum, enhancing their facial appearance (LEE DE, et al., 2015).

Aesthetic Benefits

The clinical results of the Subnasal Bullhorn Lift stand out for its effectiveness in reducing the nasal philtrum and increasing the exposure of the vermilion. Studies indicate that this technique promotes significant rejuvenation in the perioral region, with benefits that can last for years. Furthermore, the aesthetic improvement perceived by patients results in greater satisfaction and self-confidence. One study investigated whether the attractive lip proportion favored by Koreans could be achieved through superior central lip lifting surgery. The results showed an improvement in facial harmony, with minimal complications, such as visible scars or asymmetries (SEO MG, et al., 2023).

The Corner Lift is effective in lifting the lip corners, restoring a younger and more cheerful facial expression. A study involving 498 patients revealed that the technique improves the appearance of sadness caused by the downward turning of the lip corners, with most patients satisfied with the results (JEONG TK, (2020). This technique is particularly useful as a complement to other facial surgeries or when lip sagging is localized only at the corners. The integration of these techniques within the context of orofacial harmonization significantly improves facial proportions and symmetry, with high satisfaction rates. When appropriate, the combination of techniques can maximize aesthetic benefits, tailoring to the individual anatomical needs of patients.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The review highlighted that these lip lifting approaches provide significant improvements in lip definition, reduction of interlabial length, and softening of associated structures. Evidence suggests that the combination of these techniques allows for natural aesthetic results, respecting individual anatomy and promoting a harmonious facial balance. Additionally, scientific analysis points to low complication rates and long-lasting outcomes, reinforcing the applicability of these techniques as a safe and effective option for facial rejuvenation. Therefore, lip lifting, in its various forms, emerges as a promising approach for orofacial harmonization, promoting not only aesthetics but also functionality and patient satisfaction.

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