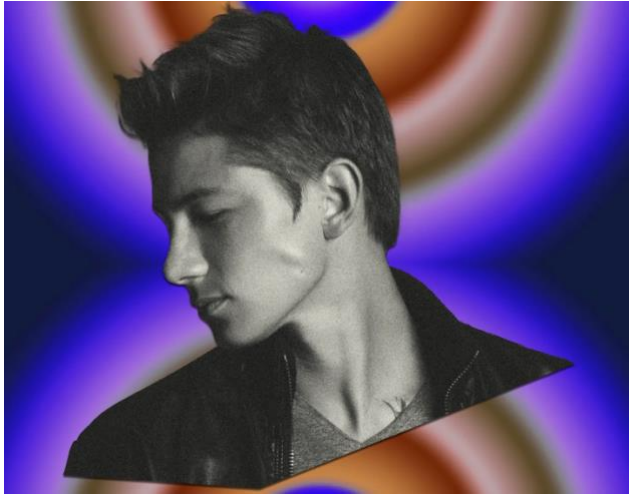


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Does the Facial-Fitness Gum Teen Boys Love *Actually* Work?

By Jennifer G. Sullivan



The Sephora Tween girls may be interested in skin care, but some boys their age want a different product designed to improve their appearance: facial-fitness gum. The chewing gum, from brands like Rockjaw, Jawz Gum, and Stronger Gum, promises to “build the most attractive jawline” and “tone and tighten 57+ facial and neck muscles, anytime, anywhere.” The companies making these products promise that chewing their gum is akin to a facial workout because it’s between two times (Jawliner “medium hard”) and ten times (Magic Gum “hard”) tougher than regular gum.

Paul Jarrod Frank, M.D., a celebrity cosmetic dermatologist, says he’s heard about the gum but doesn’t think it will do anything to sharpen jawlines. He explains that it’s marketed on the hypothetical promise that chewing a tough piece of gum will grow the masseter muscles. Even if it did, he points out that people with overgrown masseter muscles (he cites those with temporomandibular-jaw disorders, or TMJ, as an example) could end up with a more square-shaped or wider-looking face, but they “may not necessarily sharpen the undersurface of the jawline if the bone structure is not there.”

Still, a wide, square look may be what some teens want. I showed Frank before and after photos on Jawliner’s Instagram page, and he was still skeptical. “If it’s not Photoshopped, then there’s a dramatic difference in lighting, giving an impression of greater definition,” he says.

So, if the gum can’t actually reshape a jawline, are there downsides to chewing it? The obvious one is cost. Jawliner’s Ultra Touch Facial Fitness Gum is about 47 cents a piece, whereas Wrigley’s Doublemint is only eight cents a piece. And the ingredients in these gums vary widely between brands and aren’t always easy to find in online product descriptions, so you have to do some research to know what you’re getting. Most varieties I researched didn’t contain sugar, which can lead to cavities, but some contain caffeine (as a “pre-workout” boost), and others featured vitamin B5, which may have a laxative effect if consumed in high doses. Then there’s the potential for jaw pain (the American Dental Association recommends those with TMJ disorders avoid gum). And if someone is chewing obsessively, it may cause inflammation in the area, says Frank. “But in general, your average chewing gum does not have any problems whatsoever.”

Facial-fitness gum, however, is not your average gum. Besides, Frank points out, the sharper jawline some boys are after may develop naturally as they get older. “Younger people tend to have more natural fat volume in their face,” he says. “For men that are thin and fit, as they age into their 20s and 30s they will naturally, likely, see more definition.” If they don’t, they can look into more effective treatments like cosmetic fillers (to build out a jaw), micro-liposuction (to remove fat), and/or radiofrequency (to tighten skin) if they so choose.