

If you're exploring non-surgical treatments to address sagging jowls, chances are you've come across two popular options: **Ultherapy** and **Thermage**. Both promise skin tightening and a more youthful jawline. But how do they really compare when it comes to meaningful lifting—especially at the deeper layers that matter?

In this guide, we'll break down the science behind each technology, explain what "lifting" truly means in the context of jowl treatments, and give you practical insights to decide which suits your goals. Plus: why many clinic pages forget to mention pricing in SGD, and why that matters for expats in Singapore.

Understanding the Jowls Problem: Which Tissue Layer Are We Actually Treating?

Before digging into technology, let's get clear on *what* layer you want to tighten or lift. Skin aging isn't just about surface sagging—it involves multiple layers:

- **Surface Tightening:** The epidermis and superficial dermis, primarily collagen and elastin in the upper skin layers. Improves texture and fine lines.
- **Dermal Tightening:** The deeper dermis, including collagen remodeling deeper in the skin. Leads to firmer skin and some lifting effects.
- **Structural Lifting (SMAS Level):** The Superficial Musculoaponeurotic System (SMAS) is a fibrous layer that connects muscles to the skin. Invasive procedures like surgery target SMAS for real lifting. Non-invasive lifting technologies try to stimulate or tighten this level for true repositioning.

For jowls, lifting the SMAS layer is critical. Surface and dermal treatments help but don't produce the degree of lift many patients expect.

What Is Ultherapy? And How Does It Work for Jowls?

Ultherapy uses **micro-focused ultrasound with visualization (MFU-V)**. The 'V' stands for real-time imaging, a game-changer in safety and effectiveness.

How Ultherapy Works

- **Ultrasound waves are focused to create thermal coagulation points at precise depths (1.5mm, 3mm, 4.5mm).** This stimulates collagen and elastin production by initiating a natural healing response.
- **Targets the SMAS layer:** The 4.5mm transducer reaches the SMAS—the anatomical layer surgeons tighten during facelift procedures.
- **Real-time imaging lets doctors see the layer beneath your skin in real time.** This helps avoid bones or blood vessels and ensures energy delivery right where it counts.

Ultherapy's strength lies in structural lifting, not just skin tightening. It is FDA-approved for lifting the neck, chin, and brow by stimulating the SMAS.

Ultherapy Prime: What's New?

Ultherapy Prime is an upgraded version with refined handpieces and energy delivery. Clinics report better comfort and more consistent results, but the core technology—MFU-V targeting the SMAS—remains unchanged.

Important Clinic Note: Many Singapore clinics list Ultherapy Prime but omit treatment pricing in SGD on their pages. This is frustrating for clients budgeting or comparing options. Always ask upfront for total costs, including consults, treatment, and possible top-up sessions.

What About Thermage? How Does It Tighten the Jowls?

Thermage uses **radiofrequency (RF) energy** to heat the dermis and stimulate collagen contraction and [trulyexpatlifestyle](#) new collagen growth.

How Thermage Works

- **RF energy heats the dermal layer (usually 3-4.5mm depth), promoting collagen remodeling.** The heating is more diffuse and primarily affects the dermis and upper subcutaneous tissue.
- **It does not reach the SMAS layer significantly.** While some claim “deep tightening,” RF typically lacks the focal depth of micro-focused ultrasound.
- **Thermage can improve skin texture, reduce wrinkles, and provide mild to moderate tightening.**

The Limits of RF Heating for Structural Lifting

While Thermage can firm the skin surface and remodeling dermal collagen, it falls short of offering consistent SMAS-level lifting. The SMAS is deeper and thicker than what RF energy typically penetrates without risking burns or bruising.

In effect, Thermage is better for *surface contouring and mild tightening* but doesn't replicate the lifting effect of Ultherapy at the structural level.





Side-by-Side Comparison: Ultherapy vs Thermage for Jowls

Feature	Ultherapy (MFU-V)	Thermage (RF)
Target Layer	SMAS (4.5mm) + deep dermis (3mm, 1.5mm) with imaging	Superficial to mid dermis (~3-4.5mm), diffuse heating
Real-Time Imaging	Yes, ultrasound visualization	No
Depth Precision	High (focal points at specific depths)	Lower (broad, less focused penetration)
Collagen Stimulation	Stimulates new collagen & elastin in SMAS + dermis	Stimulates collagen in dermis only
Lifting Effect	Structural lift of jowls via SMAS tightening	Skin tightening, limited lift
Downtime	Mild redness and swelling, some discomfort	Minimal to mild redness and swelling
Session Duration	60–90 minutes	30–60 minutes
Typical Price Range in Singapore (SGD)	Asked separately, varies SGD 2,500–4,500 per session	Often not advertised; clinic consultation required

What to Expect in Terms of Results

Ultherapy is your go-to if you want a notable lifting effect. It can achieve subtle to moderate tightening of the jowls by stimulating the SMAS layer. Results develop slowly (2–3 months) as new collagen forms, lasting 1–2 years depending on aging and lifestyle.

Thermage works best to tighten loose skin and improve texture. It can mildly reduce jowl sagging but will not produce a substantive lift comparable to Ultherapy's effect on the SMAS. Results are often seen within weeks and last up to 6–12 months.

Comfort and Side Effects

Ultherapy can involve discomfort during energy delivery, due to focused ultrasound heating the deep layers. Some clinics offer numbing. Post-treatment swelling or redness can last a few days.

Thermage is generally more comfortable with integrated cooling, but some patients may experience heat sensations and mild redness. Downtime is minimal.

Common Clinic Questions That Dodge the Real Answer

- **“Does Thermage lift the SMAS?”** Technically no, Thermage heats the dermis and upper fat; it does not reach or tighten the SMAS layer.
- **“Are results instant with Ultherapy?”** Not exactly; initial skin contraction occurs in 1-2 weeks but the main lift from collagen remodeling emerges over 2-3 months.
- **“Is there zero downtime?”** Both treatments have some transient redness or swelling, so “no downtime” claims can be misleading without setting expectations for mild soreness.
- **“What is the exact price in SGD?”** Many clinics list prices in USD or omit pricing entirely. It’s essential to ask for full SGD quotes including consultation fees and potential follow-ups.

Summary: Which One Actually Lifts the Jowls?

1. **If structural lifting of the jowls is your goal, Ultherapy with its SMAS-targeted MFU-V and real-time imaging is the better choice.** It directly stimulates the fibrous layer responsible for true repositioning.
2. **Thermage is more suitable if you want mild tightening, skin smoothing, or collagen stimulation limited to the dermis.** It will not lift sagging jowls the way Ultherapy can.
3. **Don’t rely on “no downtime” marketing claims without asking about expected redness or soreness.**
4. **Always confirm the full price in SGD upfront. Watch out for clinics that avoid giving you concrete figures—it could complicate budgeting or comparison.**

Next Steps: Consulting Your Doctor

Before booking, ask your prospective clinic or doctor:

- Can I see real before-after photos with lighting details for Ultherapy or Thermage on jowls?
- What is the exact price in SGD for a full jowl treatment, including consult and any top-ups?
- How do you decide the treatment depth and parameters for my jowls?
- What are typical side effects and expected downtime for my skin type and age?

Understanding what tissue layer a treatment targets (*surface, dermis, or SMAS?*) helps you judge whether you’re paying for actual lifting or just surface tightening. Your lower face deserves clarity—not hype.

For expats and locals alike, arming yourself with this knowledge means smarter choices for your face and your wallet.