

BOTOX Bonanza

Has it gone too far or is this anti-aging prick one worth tolerating?

by sarah greenberg

Getting Botox is as common a practice as going to the gym these days. It's no longer the occasional celebrity using it; it's your best friend, colleague...even your husband! Some people thrive on it while others would never entertain taking a needle to one's face electively. However, if you're a curious Botox novice, considering the wrinkle-reducing procedure for yourself, here are a few things you should know before taking the plunge.

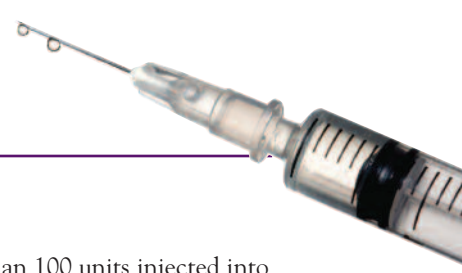
Firstly, Botox is not the answer to all of your wrinkle problems. "There's the concept of the dynamic wrinkle and the static wrinkle," explained Dr. David Schlessinger, a specialist in ophthalmic plastic surgery at Schlessinger Eye and Face. "The dynamic wrinkle exists through contractions. A static wrinkle is there whether or not you contract the muscle." So if you look in the mirror and see minor expression wrinkles, Botox will help. It will erase those lines by freezing your muscles and causing the skin to stay in place instead of constantly moving. If the wrinkles are deeper and more ingrained when your face is still, Botox likely won't work.

Botox is also commonly used to lift areas of the face. Dr. Andrew Jacono, a plastic surgeon at the New York Center for Facial Plastic Surgery who commonly uses Botox as an alternative to surgical procedures, told us how it's used to create a non-surgical brow lift: "The

way to understand how Botox lifts the face is to understand that there is a constant tug of war going on in any section of the face. There are muscles that lift a portion of the face (for example the eye-brow) and opposing muscles that pull it down. If we inject Botox in the muscle that pulls things down, the muscle that lifts wins, and the results is that that portion of the face is lifted."

Now, what exactly is being injected to make your face freeze in place? Botox cosmetic comes from botulinum toxin, a bacterium that, in large doses, causes poisoning and paralysis. However, "because it has been purified, it only affects the muscles it is directly injected into," explained Dr. Adam Bodian of the Bodian Dermatology and Medical Day Spa, who himself performs over 1000 Botox injections per year. Once injected, the toxin is absorbed into the nerves causing the contraction of muscles. This temporarily deadens those nerves, keeping them from firing the impulse that makes the muscles contract. But those nerves regenerate which is why Botox isn't a permanent procedure.

With a name like Botulinum Toxin, a name not nearly as sexy as its moniker, you can see why people may be hesitant to try it out for themselves. However, very few problems are reported. "Botox has been used in millions of patients worldwide and the response is that it's very safe for whatever it's used for," added Schlessinger. ↵



BOTOX IN A BOTTLE

Looking for an alternative anti-aging fix? Here are our picks for Botox...in a bottle:



lift

La Mer's Lifting Face Serum and Lifting Intensifier: The Lifting Face Serum stimulates the skin's internal building blocks, encouraging production of collagen and elastin while The Intensifier upholds the skin from within training the skin to sustain a more lifted appearance. \$285, *Saks Fifth Avenue*

relax

Freeze 24-7 Anti-Wrinkle Cream Reduces the appearance of lines and wrinkles with GABA, a natural muscle relaxing agent. \$115, *Nordstrom*



smooth

LiftFusion Micro-Injected M-TOX Transdermal Eye Lift: Micro-Injected M-TOX nanospheres deliver proven muscle inhibitors to smooth and relax the skin, proteins to stimulate the body's natural collagen production, and hyaluronic acid spheres to capture moisture and swell with the body's water, ultimately plumping, filling, and smoothing skin to restore a more youthful appearance. \$89, *Sephora*

support

Lancome High Resolution with Collaser-48 Targets two types of collagen, which make up the skin's underlying support network to help maintain its firmness. Starts renewing collagen in just 48 hours. \$60, *Lancome Counters*



hydrate



Sisley Hydra-Global Hydration Intense Anti-Aging Hydration: Reactivates skin's natural hydration mechanism of the skin which is slowed down by cellular aging making skin appear plump and youthful. \$225, *Saks Fifth Avenue*

"Cosmetic treatments in general are less than 100 units injected into the muscle. In order to have a toxic reaction, you would need hundreds of thousands of units directed into your bloodstream and it would just be prohibitive to do that with these little vials of Botox."

Side effects, however minor, do occur. Most specialists say these can be prevented by using a medically trained doctor with a history of experience using Botox. The most common side effect is slight bruising. With any type of injection, you can hit a vessel, resulting in discoloration. Some doctors ask their patients to stop taking Motrin and other blood thinners at least ten days prior to injection as a preventative measure for this type of bruising.

Another rare side effect is the droop of the brow or eyelid which can occur with forehead injections. Dr. Jeffrey Sklar of the Center for Aesthetic Dermatology and recognized by Allergan as a premiere administrator of Botox Cosmetic feels it's crucial for the person performing your injection to approach it with an artful eye. "You have to know the person's anatomy of their forehead," he said. "The nuances of long foreheads, short foreheads, low hairlines, high hairlines, the shape of their brows, how high their brow is — these are little nuances you examine to know where to inject and how to play with the Botox...It's an eyeball and experience thing."

Most doctors will also warn not to touch the area for a few hours following the procedure to isolate the fluid injected, keeping it from escaping into the wrong muscle and cause a droop. "The good news is that the potentially negative and rare side effects of Botox wear off much quicker than the positive," added Dr. Sklar. "If you are one of the few to get the droop, your doctor can prescribe a special eye drop that can perk up the eye temporarily."

Even with the risk of side effects, Botox use is exploding and according to the experts, women who try it once come back for more and describe it as a "real addiction." The effects of Botox, on average, take 24 to 48 hours to appear and last approximately 3 to 6 months, depending on the patient. However, the nerves do regenerate so when the muscles begin working again, women tend to rush back in for another shot.

Contrary to common beliefs, experts claim Botox does not make your wrinkles worse. "You go back to the way you were before using Botox," said cosmetic surgeon Dr. Stephen Greenberg. "If anything, many doctors agree that by continuously using Botox over a three or four year period, those muscles may even be weakened and tired so patients may find their wrinkles improving even without Botox."

Since, at this time, there are no clear alternatives to Botox that work the same way, it appears that Botox is here to stay. "There is nothing out there now to paralyze the muscles the way Botox does," said Dr. Peter Schwartz, a cosmetic plastic surgeon who uses Botox on patients that come in wanting improvements but may not be ready for the risks and costs of plastic surgery. The costs of Botox range from \$300-\$500 per needle. Some doctors charge by the area. The "crow's feet" area can cost anywhere between \$400-\$900 and the forehead can cost anywhere from \$600-\$1300 depending on the size of the area and the recommended amount of Botox the doctor feels necessary to achieve ideal results.

Aging gracefully continues to be a sign of true beauty. And there are countless controllable aspects of your natural lifestyle that can contribute to and prevent the aging process. However, if you are determined to take the plunge, you're now armed with the knowledge to do so. |