

Botox myths DEBUNKED

It's a name that is bandied about, and everyone seems to be doing it – but what are Botox fillers, what do they do, and what should you know? Our panel of aesthetic experts explains the science behind this popular frozen-freezer.

THE EXPERTS:

DR NATASHA BEGG-SPIRO
Manager of Laserderm Med-Spa

DR SLY NEDIC
Anti-aging physician and owner of 8th Sense

DR RIEKIE SMIT
President of the Aesthetic and Anti-Aging Society of South Africa

DR MAUREEN ALLEM
Founder and medical director of Skin & Body Renewal

DR ANUSHKA REDDY
President of The South African Association of Cosmetic Doctors and owner of Medisculpt

WHAT IS BOTOX?

Botox contains a purified protein complex. “A component of this complex, Botulinum Toxin Type A, is the important active ingredient,” says Dr Natasha Begg-Spiro. She explains that there are seven distinct botulinum toxins and that Type A is the one used medically and cosmetically. Botox temporarily blocks muscle contraction impulses. “It has become the most frequent cosmetic procedure used all over the world and has been FDA-approved for 20 years,” adds Dr Sly Nedic. “It is the most-researched drug in the world.”

In South Africa, the type of Botulinum Toxin most commonly used is Botox®.

“There are other, newer types of botulinum toxins that are not legally available in South Africa. Dysport® is available in SA, but is only for neurological conditions,” explains Dr Riekie Smit. She adds that in Europe and elsewhere in the world, Galderma, a dermatological company, has a new product called Azzulure, which is gaining a lot of popularity, but it is not yet available here.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Botox acts by blocking the transmission of a neurotransmitter at the junction of the nerve and the muscle. This helps to reduce overactive muscle movement temporarily in that area. Put simply, injecting Botox into an area helps to stop the nerve from instructing the muscle to contract. Botox is widely used in the medical field to treat conditions with muscular spasm, such as cervical dystonia. It is also used to treat excessive sweating and has recently received FDA approval for the treatment of chronic tension headaches. “Currently there’s worldwide research on its use in preventing scarring in wounds, and treating many other conditions where movement is undesirable,” explains Begg-Spiro.

WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

Botox is used in the aesthetic industry to eradicate or reduce frown lines, forehead lines and crow’s feet. It is most commonly used to treat lines in the top third of the face, but can be used elsewhere,

including to improve a gummy smile, soften smoker’s lines on the lips, help lift a down-turning mouth, to soften lines on the neck, and to lift the neck and jawline. Botox can be used to create a brow lift and has even been used to create a temporary breast lift.

WHEN WILL I SEE RESULTS?

Typically, Botox takes three to seven days to start working and takes two weeks for the maximum effect. Small red bumps are visible immediately afterward the procedure, but usually disappear within half an hour. After a session, it is advisable not to lie down for four hours, and to avoid saunas, steam baths and exercise for at least 12 hours. The effects usually wear off after three to six months, but this varies from patient to patient and the initial amount of Botox units given. “With repeated Botox treatments, the result of Botox injections may last for longer periods. Some patients have a hyperactive brow and are constantly raising their brows. In these patients, a shorter effect can be expected, as the Botox is quickly worked out,” says Dr Maureen Allem.

LATEST TRENDS

The trend nowadays is to start using Botox at an earlier age, as regular use will help to prevent wrinkles from becoming deep and ingrained, informs Begg-Spiro. “Botox can also be used for facial shaping of the lower jawline,” says Allem. Strategically placed Botox injections can change a square-like facial shape into a more pleasing oval shape.

Otherwise known as chemical facial sculpting, this is a highly successful, non-surgical way to beautifully contour the lower face to create a slimmer, more feminine jaw. “Some patients have very active jaw muscles that give their face a very square shape. These are called the masseter muscles and are located at the angle of the jaw,” explains Dr Anushka Reddy. She adds that these are the main

BY CANDICE TEHINI

muscles used for chewing and biting and that injecting botulinum toxins in these muscles can reduce their size. Allem also adds that there is a new technique to injecting Botox, which is to apply very superficial micro-injections of Botox all around the forehead and jawline area. “This prevents the mask-like effect of over-injecting Botox.” With this new technique, wrinkles are softened, but muscles retain their function.

PROS AND CONS

If excessive amounts of Botox are used, you may experience lack of expression in the upper half of your face. If you go to an inexperienced injector, a medial brow droop or a dropped eyebrow or eyelid can result. “But on the upside, if done

correctly, you can have a more youthful, relaxed and refreshed appearance with no downtime,” says Allem. It can also lift your brows, making your eyes appear wider, and long-term use will prevent a drooping brow and jaw. “Botox tends to look better and more natural in young to middle-aged patients,” says Begg-Spiro.

Eventually, every patient will get to a stage where Botox can make them look hard, or having a smooth forehead doesn’t suit a lined lower face. Many people report a decrease in severity and frequency of headaches, and some find that being unable to frown ferociously makes them feel more relaxed.

WHERE DO YOU GO?

There isn’t one governing body for aesthetic practitioners, but our experts all agree that they should belong to some or other medical board and that word of mouth is a must. Visit www.cosmeticdoctors.co.za and www.aestheticdoctors.co.za to see if your practitioner is a member of either one of these reputable boards. Another good way to judge if your injector is experienced is to ask them how long they have been doing it and how many times they have done it; it’s also a good idea to look at their book of before-and-after pictures. ■

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GLOBAL TREND FOR LIQUID FACELIFTS

After the International Anti-Aging Congress in Monte Carlo, Allem says there is a move to stop chasing individual lines and wrinkles, rather taking a more “global” approach to faces. According to Allem, there is a new way to ensure a more youthful look, with the latest volumising technique. “It is a magic needle called a cannula. It allows us to restore lost volume from aging to the face with far less discomfort to the patient. Bruising and downtime is minimal and it delivers a more even result.” It is based on getting the golden ratio of the face, also known as the Fibonacci ratio, spot on. This is a specific measurement of 1:1.61, which is considered the most appealing to the eye. However, to look five to 10 years younger, the new procedure does require a number of fillers. Allem shares: “Rome wasn’t built in a day. This new procedure can be done over a period of time with the same result.”