



health and beauty

Cosmetic Botox - Is it for You?

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WITH THE RECENT STAMP OF APPROVAL BY THE FDA, BOTOX injections to remove wrinkles have become the most talked about treatment in years. Many people however are surprised to learn that therapeutic use of Botox dates back over twenty years.

Botox is purified, dilute botulinum toxin type A. It was initially developed by ophthalmologists for treatment of eye muscle disorders (strabismus), uncontrolled blinking (blepharospasm), and other facial tics. Botox was FDA approved for treatment of these disorders in 1989. I began treating patients with the drug fifteen years ago, and found them to be among the most grateful and enthusiastic of all my patients. To them, Botox was a miracle, allowing them to lead a normal life, previously thought impossible.

In the early 1990s, another ophthalmologist first saw the potential of Botox to treat facial wrinkles. It made perfect sense. Botox works by temporarily paralyzing the targeted muscle. Since frown lines, horizontal forehead lines, and "crow's feet," are all caused by muscle contraction, treatment of the muscles causing these lines with Botox greatly diminishes or even eliminates the wrinkles. The effect is temporary, with function returning to the muscle over three to six months.

Last year, even before FDA approval for wrinkle treatment, cosmetic Botox injections were the most popular cosmetic procedure performed in the United States. Why the popularity? It's safe, effective, takes minutes to perform, and allows patients to return to work immediately. Our patients come in before, during, and after work, with no downtime. No one needs to know why you look so good unless you want to tell them. Patients will say "People always think I look angry," but after Botox now

appear worry free. More recently we have also been treating other areas such as upper lip lines, drooping corners of the mouth, and neck bands.

How safe is Botox? Despite the ominous sound of "botulinum toxin" there has never been a fatality associated with its use. The most feared complication is a temporary weakness of the eyelid producing a droop. This can last a few weeks to a few months, but is always temporary. The risk nationwide is three percent of all treated. With fifteen years experience, I have found our rate to be less than one percent.

Another aspect to understand is that Botox only treats lines and wrinkles caused by muscle contraction. Lines such as those running from the corner of the nose to the corner of the mouth, the nasolabial folds, are not associated with muscle activity and therefore will not respond to Botox treatment.

I was recently asked by a reporter if I believe Botox will continue to rise in popularity. I answered "yes." For the right patient, when performed by the right doctor, the results are extremely gratifying, and the risks few. To determine if Botox is for you, schedule a consultation with an experienced physician. You may just be thrilled at what it can do for you. ■

Dr. Brackup is medical director of Cosmetic Surgery Specialists, with offices in Langhorne and Doylestown. An internationally recognized educator of cosmetic surgeons, Dr. Brackup was selected to direct one of one hundred Botox Physician Training Centers nationwide, dedicated to teaching physicians safe and effective techniques of Botox administration.