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THE MANY USES OF BOTOX

Botulinum Toxin, commercially known as Botox, can be used for several different problems, both cosmetic and medical, explains **SALLY WADDINGTON**.

In the USA, Botox has become a popular treatment for wrinkles – and not just for movie stars. Today even business men have Botox injections to remove the anxious expression from their faces. Leading surgeons in Los Angeles perform up to 200 injections a week.

So what's all the fuss about? Botox is a purified protein produced by Botulism bacteria. Its injection is an easy, almost

painless procedure that produces noticeable results. It takes only a short time, and the patient is usually able to go home or back to work immediately.

Botox can be used for a variety of problems. Cosmetically, the most popular is to remove fine lines and wrinkles from

the face. It can be used to remove 'crow's feet' from next to the eyes, 'frown lines' from between the eyebrows, and forehead lines. Beverly Hills cosmetic surgeon Dr Simon Ourian is also using it for other areas now. "More often we are using it to remove wrinkles from around the mouth and lips, and the bands in the neck," he reports. Formerly it was not possible to remove lines from under the eyes, but with new techniques and experience, it is.

The treatment also has many medical uses. It has long been used for neurological purposes, and is very successful for migraine sufferers. "Botox is a safe and effective treatment of migraine headaches," reported Los Angeles facial plastic surgeon Dr William Binder. It is also useful for people who have problems with severe sweating.

The use of Botox is a very precise treatment that must be performed carefully to ensure its success. Firstly, a specific muscle is chosen, depending on the area of the desired result. The surgeon then isolates that muscle and uses a tiny needle to inject a very small amount of the toxin into the muscle. This stops the nerve telling the muscle to move (therefore

temporarily paralyzing it) causing wrinkles to disappear. Australian surgeon Dr Anoop Rastogi explained: "For some lines, Botox produces a magnificent effect and is probably superior to any other form of wrinkle removal. It physically stops the contraction of those muscles – and therefore prevents those lines."

Botox treatments are temporary. The muscle is paralyzed for only 3-5 months, after which time patients need to return to their doctor for a repeat treatment. However, after each treatment the effects last a little longer. Eventually, most patients will need treatments only once or twice a year.

As with any medical treatment, there are risks involved. Some patients experience slight temporary bruising at the injection site that can be easily covered with make-up. Occasionally, the toxin can migrate to other muscles and cause temporary weakness. In rare cases, drooping of an eyelid or an asymmetrical facial expression can occur. However all possible side effects are temporary, lasting only a few weeks, as Botox is completely reversible.

Botox is becoming increasingly useful for both cosmetic and medical purposes. The ease of the treatment, and the relative safety, mean it is becoming one of the most popular ways of removing lines from people's faces.

BOTOX TREATMENT TIPS

To make sure you get the best possible result after the procedure:

- Do not lie down for four hours
- Try not to touch the area for four hours to stop the treatment from spreading to nearby muscles
- Avoid exercise – no heavy exercise for 24 hours
- Botox usually takes 3-5 days to take effect
- Studies indicate the duration of treatment benefits increase over time, so injections are required less frequently in future.

