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### Life Etches the Lines, Botox Eases 'Em

BEAUTY

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It's the cosmetic equivalent of forbidden love.

Few women will admit to having their wrinkles ironed out with Botox, made from the same toxin that causes the deadly form of food poisoning called botulism. Nevertheless, Botox injections are hot among 30- to 50-year-olds, according to the American Academy of Dermatology in Schaumburg, Ill.

As horrid as it sounds, Botox (the trade name of a diluted, purified form of botulinum toxin A) is approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat eye twitches and ticks by temporarily paralyzing the muscles responsible. Dermatologists soon began co-opting Botox for use in the same area—on crow's feet, the vertical "scowl lines" between the brows, and on the horizontal "surprise lines" across the forehead.

By stopping the constant contraction of those muscles (orbicularis oculi, corrugator and frontalis, respectively), which pull on the skin, Botox smooths out expression lines and may even prevent their formation in younger patients. A Botox session can cost anywhere from \$325 to \$750, depending on the sites treated, and keeps the muscles paralyzed (or "relaxed," as doctors like to say) for four to six months.

Fans of the treatment say Botox is cheaper than collagen injections

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and lasts a bit longer, although the two don't really compete. Botox is used only on the upper half of the face, while collagen works well on the lower, filling in laugh lines and grooves around the mouth. They're both part of a larger trend toward "wash and wear" procedures that can be done in a doctor's office on a lunch hour.

Instead of saving up all their money (and their wrinkles) for a \$10,000 face lift at age 50, many women are opting for less expensive, noninvasive treatments to fix each new sign of age as it occurs. "People want to improve their appearance without doing something drastic," says Dr. Howard Murad of the Murad Medical Group in El Segundo. "Botox is part of the broader picture that includes the use of Retin-A, Renova and glycolic acid," products that soften skin texture and smooth fine wrinkles. Murad has seen a large increase in the number of men and women asking for Botox.

An actor in his 40s sought out Dr. William Binder, a facial plastic surgeon in Los Angeles, at the urging of his TV director boss. The patient's nervous habit of raising his eyebrows had created deep forehead creases that appeared even deeper on camera. "Collagen wasn't helping much," Binder says, "and the patient didn't want a forehead lift to weaken the muscle. So we tried Botox, which absolutely wiped out those horizontal lines. It was a godsend for his career."