

## Are you a Botox addict?

BONNIE ESTRIDGE, Daily Mail - 14th March 2003

I have a fear of flying. What helps?

Like the celebrities it serves, poor old Botox has been put on a pedestal - only to be knocked down again.

We've heard that Hollywood stars are being turned down for plum parts because their faces are so frozen they cannot react to the emotions their roles require.

We've suffered the side effect horror stories of drooping brows and crooked smiles.

The latest revelation is that the wrinkle-busting injections - which miraculously stop you looking cross when you're not and are quicker, cheaper and a damn sight less painful than a facelift - may 'give you more wrinkles than they banish'.

As a Botox devotee for the past six years, I'd say that this is clearly a case of poison being heaped on to poison.

I'm sure that other women, who think it's the only wrinkle-busting treatment worth its weight in deadly, but purified and diluted, bacteria, are also fed up with the sudden backlash. Thousands of women know that used properly, it is the right stuff.

Granted, Cher is incapable of moving anything on her face except her eyeballs (and even this appears to be a difficulty these days). Leslie Ash admitted she had Botox injections but stopped after they made her face rigid.

And Ab Fab inspiration Lynn Franks complains that she suffered eyelid droop.

But it's the women who don't know when enough's enough who cause the problems, because that's when Botox bites back.

Frankly, any cosmetic surgeon worth his syringe will know when to say 'no' when an addict pleads for a fix too far of these injections which freeze muscles in your face.

As a general rule, women should have an absolute minimum of four months between visits. Rumour has it that some celebrities' surgeons have banned them from their clinics because they feel their 'habits' are getting out of control.

Unfortunately, there are far too many money-grabbing cowboys out there who, like bad plumbers or car mechanics, will find another little job where none is needed.

My reason for having Botox was because, since my late 20s, I had a vertical indentation that was 'set' between my eyes, just above the bridge of my nose. My other half had started saying: 'Why are you in such a bad mood?'

When I happened to be feeling extremely happy, builders would shout the classic 'Cheer up love, it may never

happen' and soon friends were telling me I frowned even when I was smiling.

Researching a story for the Mail in 1997 on how Botox was used medically for those with involuntary muscle spasms, I learned that it was also being used for cosmetic reasons.

Patients with facial 'tics' found that it not only stopped the spasms but also ironed out their wrinkles. So when the cosmetic surgeon I was interviewing asked if I fancied a 'pop', I decided to go for it in the name of research.

And so I found myself lying in a private clinic in Harley Street, rigid with fear, a syringe hovering over my face.

Back then, it was as furtive as a facelift. As I asked what the risks were, the surgeon simply told me: 'I'm very conservative with the first dose - give too much and it

can cause temporary drooping of the muscles and make you lopsided.'

Before I had a chance to leave, the needle went in, several times. After feeling as though I had a permanent swimming cap on for a couple of days, those nasty little lines that made me look so cross had smoothed out.

SOON, all traces of any other lines on my forehead had vanished, the brow seemed to have lifted and although I'm not sure that I looked younger, I looked far more wide-awake and most definitely happier.

My husband had thought I was mad to have it done, but afterwards he had to admit I looked a lot better.

Close friends noticed a subtle change in my appearance but couldn't guess what I'd had done. And for me that is the beauty of Botox - used properly, the results *are* subtle. That, in itself, was a good enough reason to go back for more.

Since then I've had it done every six months - but only when the time is right and those nasty little lines come out of hibernation.

It's certainly not because I'm addicted to the stuff and begging my surgeon to fill imaginary lines - or, for that matter, lines that have appeared elsewhere because I'm trying to scowl and have activated a muscle that previously lay dormant.

The latest news is that this can happen, but the truth is that it can be easily corrected on follow-up visits.

I know women who have become addicted to it and I can feel only pity for those in the public eye, forever scrutdfinising their faces for more wrinkles to show up on the big screen, on TV or in paparazzi photos.

Don't go down the 'drink and drugs' route of the Botox party (a disaster waiting in the wings) and remember that less is more. Only then can you look forward to a wrinkle-free future.

When all's said and done, the Botox Bashers should leave our favourite cosmetic tipple alone.