

Is this the end of Botox?

by BEATRICE AIDIN, Daily Mail - 19th February 2003



Pic: Jenny Goodall

Botox is our favourite cosmetic surgery procedure

Botox injections to freeze forehead wrinkles and iron out crows' feet are our most popular type of cosmetic treatment.

In 2000, 24,336 cosmetic procedures were performed in the UK, costing £180 million, with Botox coming top of the list.

This is hardly surprising, given that a series of face-freezing injections is a mere £200 on the High Street, takes a few seconds to do, is virtually painless and is almost instantly effective.

Nagging doubts about Botox remain, however. After all, the chemical (correct name Botulinum Toxin A) is allegedly stockpiled as a weapon by Saddam Hussein.

Admittedly, the quantity used in each treatment is minute and highly diluted. Even so, it can be dangerous. If you put too much in your neck to smooth wrinkles, for instance, you may not be able to swallow, or lift your head up.

Cliff Richard recently complained about a botched Botox job that left him with drooping eyelids. And Hollywood directors increasingly bemoan the effects of the bacteria, which mean actors are left with frozen features, unable to express any emotion on camera.

'We want to look 20 years younger, sometimes so much so that we forget about what we are putting in our bodies,' warns facialist Eve Lom, whose clients include Madonna.

'Research hasn't yet shown what the longterm effects of Botox are.'

Some people resort to expensive anti-ageing creams instead. Although such creams sell well, they can take three months to show results.

So what's the solution? Two French plastic surgeons think they know. Dr Alain Butnaru and Dr Daniel Sister have launched Vitaface, a treatment that is being heralded as the vitamin alternative to Botox.

The doctors whose walls are covered with thank-you notes from clients such as Michael Douglas - claim that Vitaface can minimise wrinkles and the propensity to develop them.

'It's like giving the face a good tonic,' says Dr Butnaru. 'The combined effect is of firmer skin, increased hydration and reduced signs of ageing. The treatment lasts a minimum of a month.'

First, the face is numbed with a local anaesthetic cream and sealed from oxygen and free radicals, using a plastic wrap, for 20 minutes.

Once the cream is removed, the patient's face is injected with 10cc of a cocktail of vitamins, trace elements, an antioxidant called selenium (which contains nutrients), and hyaluronic acid (which helps the skin to absorb moisture).

'When you inject below the surface of the skin, it enables the face to create collagen and elastine, which are essential for creating new cells,' says Dr Butnaru.

The doctors claim the procedure is totally safe. It has been available in Paris for more than a year, and none of the people who have tried it has suffered any adverse reaction to date.

Still, experts question the severity and invasiveness of the procedure.

'If I need to be under anaesthetic to feed my skin, then something is wrong,' says Eve Lom.