

I'm having a Botox party!

by ANDREA PERRY, femail.co.uk - 2nd March 2001



Frown-free: Patsy Kensit regularly has Botox injections

First it was the Tupperware party. Then came Ann Summers.

Now the new millennium has brought its own twist on the traditional female gathering - the cosmetic surgery party.

Growing numbers of women - and even some men - are lining up alongside celebrities to get the latest anti-wrinkle treatment, the Botox injection.

In London the Botox party night has become a growing trend for the cosmetic generation.

At £200 a time, the Botox injection doesn't come cheap but has become one of the most popular procedures because it involves no surgery and can act as an instant facelift.

Doctors discovered that the injection - a minute, purified form of the botulism bacteria which has been used for a range of medical conditions - can also improve your looks. It works by weakening muscles that create wrinkles and frowns - leaving you looking fresher and younger.

The injection is a prescription only medication and so can only be administered by a qualified surgeon, GP or nurse practitioner.

Dr Mike Cummins, a qualified GP, who is based at the private Lifestyle clinic in Knightsbridge, usually sees clients at his practice but after requests from patients now carries out group treatments at informal Botox party nights.

'A lot of my clients in Notting Hill and Chelsea are friends,' he said. 'One of them asked if I would mind doing a group of them together one night and it evolved like that.'

Dr Mike, as he has become known on the Botox circuit, creates a home made surgery in the kitchen of the party host, positioning his lights and syringes.

'It is all done properly and professionally,' he says. 'Consent forms are signed and I will only do gatherings of no more than five and alcohol is banned. I explain the ins and outs of the treatment because I don't want to treat women who have been pushed into it by peer pressure.'

'It works very well because some patients like to be treated in the more relaxing and informal environment of their home with their friends on hand to give them support.'

Although he's only carried out parties in Britain so far, Dr Cummins is willing to extend the service across the UK.

New York beauty consultant Wendy Lewis, author of *The Lowdown on Facelifts and Other Wrinkle Remedies*, says she knows of only a few American doctors who would offer a travelling Botox service.

'One big New York dermatologist is frequently asked by her actress and model patients to do their Botox on the set or in a hotel suite at The Mercer,' she said.

Adding: 'Botox parties makes British women sound like they are very evolved on the subject of cosmetic enhancement, but a quick survey should reveal that these are really an isolated event.

'Why on earth would you want to have Botox in a group setting? I for one prefer to have my Botox solo and in private so my doctor can concentrate on my lines and wrinkles and not a bunch of other ladies.

'Most women don't come clean about how much Botox they have or where they have it, which isn't going to change anytime soon.'

The Patient Advisory Service helps men and women considering cosmetic surgery to make an informed judgement.

The PAS has 12 years of dealing with the cosmetic surgery field and can recommend consultants or surgeons who are on the Specialist Register of Plastic Surgeons on lists held by the General Medical Council.

Joy Parker-Fleming, a senior advisor with PAS, has had three Botox injections over the last year in her forehead and the brow of her eyes.

She said: 'Botox is the fastest growing non-cosmetic surgery procedure in this country and over the last few years has really taken off. It has been quite phenomenal. I am a great advocate of it because it makes you feel so much better and can save you going through surgery - it's so natural.

'I am very happy with the results. I think it is brilliant. A lot of men who are working in stressful jobs are also increasingly having Botox injections because they want to stay young and fresh. It takes away the frown lines which tend to show in your mid 20s.'

The former Mrs Noel Gallagher, Meg Matthews spent £300 on Botox injections to freeze out the lines on her forehead while her ex-sister-in-law Patsy Kensit, who was married to Liam Gallagher, recently admitted in an interview that she has them every six months to prevent lines forming.

Nikki Kingdon, 51, who was romantically linked with Jeffrey Archer also has regular Botox injections as does ageing pop star Sir Cliff Richard in a bid to keep frown-free.

Here is our guide to Botox and how it works

What is Botox?

Botox is the trade name of Botulinum toxin type and is a purified toxin produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. It paralyses the muscle into which it is injected so that frowning becomes impossible. To be most effective, treatments must be carried out every three or four months in the first year. After that time, you may have lost the habit of frowning altogether.

Botulinum toxin has been used very safely and successfully since 1982 by ophthalmologists to treat nervous twitching of the eyelid and lazy eye. Thousands of patients receive Botox for a variety of other conditions including excessive sweating, but over the last 10 years it has become popular for reversing the visible signs of ageing.

Does it hurt?

When Botox is injected there is an initial minor sting for a few seconds. Once the injection is complete, there is usually no discomfort. No sedation or local anaesthesia is required and you can resume normal activities immediately.

How does it work?

When Botox is injected into a muscle, it blocks the nerve impulse from reaching that area, and as a result, the muscle weakens. As the muscle weakens, the skin overlying the muscle relaxes and the wrinkle in the skin gradually softens and often disappears.

What areas can be treated?

It is most commonly performed in the upper face to improve the appearance of forehead lines, vertical frown lines between the eyebrows and crow's feet or laughter lines.

How long does it last?

The full effects of Botox treatment are not apparent for three to seven days and should last for three to six months. A top-up injection is required after this period to maintain the skin smoothing effects.

Side effects

There are very few side effects. This is mainly because it is used in extremely small amounts and does not spread throughout the body. However it can cause temporary bruising, a rash or mild headache.

In some cases, the toxin can migrate and cause a temporary weakness of nearby muscles. In rare cases, there can be drooping of an eyelid but this is mainly as a result of the Botox being wrongly injected. Patients who are pregnant or have a neurologic disease should not use it.