

Can the Botox mask really beat wrinkles?

BONNIE ESTRIDGE, Daily Mail - 2nd November 2001

There's no doubt that Botox - a poisonous bacteria which smoothes out lines by paralysing facial muscles - has revolutionised the cosmetic surgery industry. Thousands of women have the injections up to four times a year, costing between £200 and £300 a time.

But many hate the thought of having the purified form of a toxin which causes botulism injected into their body, or simply dislike injections. Now, the Rejuvenage BoMask claims to wipe away fine wrinkles with a face mask to which Botox has been added. We sent Peta Hawkes, 43, an interior designer from Wandsworth, South-West London, to test the BoMask at the Rejuvenage Medical Clinic in Harley Street, London.

EARLIER this year I had my first Botox treatment and found it very effective in eradicating frown lines, giving me a smooth forehead. Several friends had already had it done, with excellent results, so

I wanted to try it for myself.

There were no side-effects at all, no bruising or drooping of the brow, just a little redness after the injections into a few points in my forehead.

I wasn't worried about trying it because needles don't bother me. However, it's a pretty expensive business, at around £200 a time. And although it's said to be safe, there's always the question at the back of one's mind that perhaps injecting toxins into the body is rather a drastic thing to do.

With Botox, while the muscles are paralysed you simply cannot frown. The lines caused by the habit soften and appear non-existent.

Sadly, when the effects wear off the lines re-appear. So I was keen to try something less radical which would give a similar effect.

When I read about the BoMask, I had visions of a latex mask impregnated with Botox which one had to sleep in for weeks on end.

It claims to have the benefits of Botox without the need for injections, possible bruising, pain or temporary drooping of the eyelids. I was even more intrigued to read that it could treat the whole face and décolleté - which is not the case with the injections which are really only suitable for the brow area.

The mask is described as being a blend of tropical herbal extracts to which a dose of Botox is added just before the mask is applied. So, although it is the same dose that one would have when being injected, it is applied onto the skin rather than injected into muscle.

I regularly use muscle-toning face masks but I couldn't imagine how this treatment would give a Botox effect if it was not actually injected.

Apparently it works by 'de-contracting' the muscles creating a relaxing effect as opposed to the contracting and paralysing effect of the injection.

THE manufacturers claim the mask will act in a more subtle way, giving a 'glowing, relaxed, clean face with attenuation of the lines and firmer skin on the cheeks but will not actually freeze the muscle'.

At £90 a go, this treatment was not cheap, and I couldn't wait to see if it would live up to its name.

The whole process took around 40 minutes. The results, I was told, would become apparent in two days, whereas when I had the Botox injections, they started working straight away.

I had been told that this treatment did not have the paralysing effect of the injections so I wasn't

worried that my face would become 'frozen' at all.

Dr Daniel Sister, who was about to give me the treatment, explained that the mask had been devised with anti-ageing creams and that although it had been on the market for less than six months, it was becoming increasingly popular.

As I relaxed on the couch, he placed what felt like tiny electrical probes all over my skin. This was to stimulate the cells to produce more collagen and elastin and make the skin more receptive to the mask. It felt slightly tingly, but not at all unpleasant.

Then he mixed up the mask formulation which he said contains Vitamins C and E, tropical herbal extracts, marine collagen, encapsulated oxygen and the Botox.

He immediately applied the mask over my face, jawline and neck because Botox 'goes off' rapidly. The mask - which was white and odourless - felt cold, smooth and slimy, rather like a clay or mud face pack.

I lay dozing for 20 minutes as it set and then it was peeled off bit by bit. My face was wiped clean before a special cream was applied to moisturise the skin.

My complexion felt lovely and smooth. I had a healthy, pink, almost 'flushed' glow which - since I'd just had flu and my skin had looked rather dull before the treatment - pepped me up no end.

BUT - and here's the million-dollar question - had the lines smoothed out permanently? Well, two days later when I had been told I would see the optimum effect, my skin certainly looked smooth and still felt soft.

I would say the BoMask gave me an all-round boost, but it softened the lines rather than eliminated them altogether. Without doubt, Botox injections have far more impact - when you look in the mirror you see a big difference.

The BoMask is a lovely treatment which gives great results and my skin stayed radiant, clear and smooth for more than a week. So if you have a special event for which you need to look your best, it may be worth doing for an instant lift.

However, it is expensive - I worked out that if you had the treatment every two weeks for four months you would end up paying more than three times the price of one Botox treatment - hardly cost-effective.

A couple of weeks later, I decided that my frown lines may have been softened but were definitely still there, so I went to see Harley Street cosmetic surgeon Jan Stanek for a Botox injection.

I asked him whether he thought Botulinum toxin added to a face mask could have any noticeable effect on the skin.

He told me: 'You cannot absorb Botox through the skin - it has to be injected into the muscle that causes the wrinkles or the frowning. I can see no beneficial reason to add Botox to a face mask.'