

HEALTH

FACIAL REJUVENATION: Nonsurgical

Botox

The Wrinkle Buster

Yes, it's botulin. But the appeal — diminished forehead furrowing, frown lines and crow's feet — **makes it America's No. 1 cosmetic procedure.**

Almost 3.2 million Botox injections were given last year, making it the most popular cosmetic procedure in the country, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. Women get nine out of 10 injections.

Botox is considered safe, but be careful: "It is important to know how many units are being injected," says dermatologist Dr. Kenneth Beer of West Palm Beach. "Some less scrupulous injectors are now diluting the Botox down so patients are getting mostly saline." These injections will last only a couple of weeks and can be dangerous.

In addition to wrinkles, Botox can be used to treat migraines and excessive perspiration.

In most cases, Botox is injected directly into the muscle with a

tiny needle. It temporarily paralyzes the muscles that cause wrinkles. It takes a few days to realize the effect of the injections, which last three to four months and cost \$400 to \$1,000, depending on the amount of product used. Most patients return to work immediately.

PROCEDURE: BOTOX

Ana Licata, 42, Palm Beach

Physician: Dr. Mark Pinsky, West Palm Beach

Why she did it: Just because Licata works at a plastic surgeon's office doesn't mean she gets little pick-me-up Botox injections all the time.

"People think I must because I work here, but we're so busy it's hard to find the time," says Licata, who works for Dr. Pinsky.

Licata gets injections twice a year, "and it really lasts that long," she says, although results will vary from person to

person. Her sales pitch continues: "Botox is perfect for patients looking for a noninvasive procedure that is fast and easy and painless and takes away the lines."

But it's perfectly arched brows that personally sold her. "He's able to raise the corners of my brows to give me a lift," she says. "It's like day and night. I love it."

She also receives injections in her glabella, the area between the brows, and at the corner of her eyes to treat crow's feet.

Licata says many regulars don't opt for any anesthetic, although it is always offered.

"I'm a chicken," she admits. "They do a topical anesthetic on me."

Another trend she's noticed: "Patients are coming in younger and younger because they've figured out that if they start Botox early, their creases never get the chance to deepen."

PROCEDURE:

BOTOX AND SCULPTRA

Karla Davis, 59, Parkland

Physician: Dr. Marta Rendon, Boca Raton

Why she did it: Davis wanted to look her best for her daughter's wedding. She worried about forehead wrinkles and folds near her mouth showing up in pictures.

Over several months, Dr. Rendon, a dermatologist, gave her multiple injections of Botox and Sculptra, a semi-permanent filler, plus a few glycolic peels.

"I tell my husband, 'I'm like a car. The older the car gets, the more you have to take care of it.' "

Botox injections take care of the furrows in her forehead and crow's feet around her eyes. "I try to make it stretch to only two appointments a year because of the expense," she says. "It's like \$450."

Sculptra was injected into the folds that flanked her mouth once a month for five months. The price? More than \$5,000.

"But if it lasts five years, it works out," she reasons.

Since 1997, the number of Botox injections in the U.S. has increased almost 50 times, from 65,000 to 3.2 million.

PROCEDURE: BOTOX

Number performed in 2006: 3,181,592; Average cost: \$400-\$1,000 per treatment region; How long effects last: Several months; Recovery period: Return to work immediately; Risks: Bruising, numbness and burning during injections. Eyelid droop is possible.

Source: The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2006 data