

Are you a Botox Virgin?

By Anna D Guanche, MD FAAD



First things first: you don't know what you're missing! Most likely you have seen that one woman at the gym or in the nail shop that looks like she is crying when she tries to laugh, and at rest her skin looks as if it is coated with a plastic sheeting. Let me tell you—I believe that one bad Botox or lip job can deter thousands of people from ever trying any of these cutting edge cosmetic treatments that truly help slow down the aging process. Beautifully done Botox looks natural, smooth at rest but still with the ability to make expression.

Virgin injectable patients tend to be understandably nervous, cautious and inquisitive. Many times they will bring a friend to the office. They will second-guess themselves and sometimes opt out. The ones who decide to try are often delighted, and return to the office for a full treatment. On their second visit, the apprehension is gone leaving a cheerful anticipation of excellent results.

Common questions are:

Who can I trust to do this procedure? Ideally you will choose an experienced, board-certified dermatologist or plastic surgeon with an eye for perfection to perform your procedures. Trust your face to the best. In cosmetic endeavors, you most often get what you pay for.

Does it hurt? Botox is very tolerable. Injections are performed with a tiny (30 gauge) needle and numbing cream can be used ahead of time. Most of my patients are surprised how little it hurts.

Will I feel numb? Botox does not numb the face—it only acts on motor nerves that control facial expression. The sensation on the skin does not change.

How long does it last? Botox is in full effect at 7 days and lasts approximately 4 months. At 4 months the lines and movement are back to pre-treatment appearance. Some patients prefer to come in at 3-3.5 months, to maintain their look. For younger patients in their 20's and 30's, it is easy to go long between treatments, but as patients "grow up," they need more frequent upkeep.

Is the Botox in my system for the whole four months?

No. Let's get technical: Botox goes in and "does its thing," which is to cleave tiny proteins in the nerve endings, and is then gone within four hours. It takes seven days for the synapses between nerve ending and muscle to be depleted of the neurotransmitter, acetylcholine, which sends messages to move, or wrinkle. After that it is up to the body to regenerate those small proteins. Once regenerated, acetylcholine can again be translocated into the synapse and tell muscles to move again. It is really the time to regeneration that defines how long Botox lasts.

Will my eyebrows go up? A brow-lift is a desired effect of Botox, but not pointed, exaggerated brows A la Spock. By technique it is possible to achieve lifted brows without

overarching them. And of course, Botox can be adjusted after the fact. Small doses in strategic places can take down "points" or lift brows a bit more.

What if I don't like it? The best (and worst) thing about Botox is that it is temporary. If you don't like it or don't feel like keeping it up, you don't have to. You will go back to just the way you were, minus about 4 months of wrinkling.

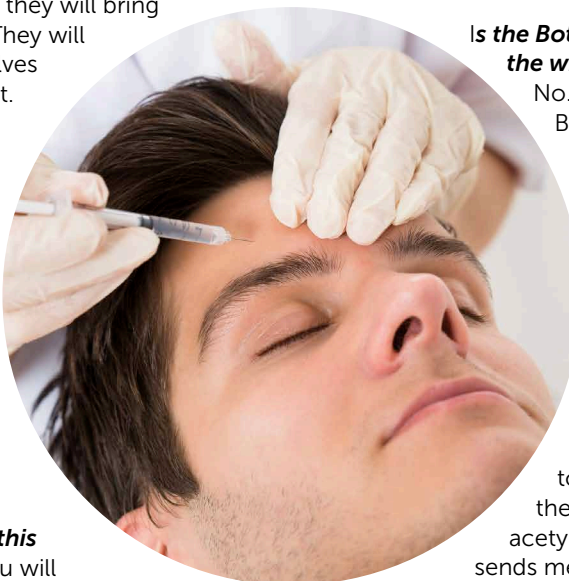
Will I be addicted to Botox? No. Botox is not addictive in the chemical sense, however from the standpoint of your appearance, you will likely want to keep it up. Once you see how smooth and wrinkle-free your face can look, it is often difficult to go back to the lines.

Will I look like Joan Rivers/Dolly Parton/Kenny Rogers/Angelina Jolie/Kylie Jenner? No. You will look just like you, only refreshed. The goal of these treatments is to present a beautiful you, not someone else. It is important to take guidance from the professional treating you as to when you have had enough Botox or filler.

Who generally gets this done? Most everyone, with a growing population of men.

Preventative maintenance is key to preserving a youthful appearance and Botox is the most commonly performed cosmetic procedure in this country. It has an excellent safety record. I have personally performed over 11,000 Botox treatments in my 14 years of practice. When done artfully, Botox results in a beautiful, refreshed look. So Botox virgins everywhere, let me allay your fears!

Disclaimer: This article is for general informational purposes and does not substitute for Individual medical advice.



Anna D. Guanche, M.D., is a board-certified dermatologist and dermatologic surgeon specializing in cosmetic procedures that have minimal downtime with excellent results. Her practice and team at the Bella Skin Institute in Calabasas care for a variety of skin conditions with a special emphasis in the areas of cosmetic dermatology and laser surgery. She aids in the teaching of residents and medical students. She is a member of the Dermatology staff at UCLA Medical Center, Olive View, as well as a clinical instructor at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine.