

# Explaining 'Botox' And Plastic Surgery

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BROOKLYN — In today's society, rapid results are increasingly important.

Information that used to travel at the speed of sound now catapults at the speed of light. We want it perfect and we want it now.

For those of us practicing plastic surgery in New York City, this poses a daunting challenge. Whether it is the "week-end facelift" reports on the evening news or the promise of over the counter "cosmeceuticals" to ward off potential surgery, patients want maximal results with minimal downtime. Unfortunately, the old saying "minimal procedure, minimal results" applies more often than not.

There are, however, a few options that are rapid and effective, yet still satisfy the aesthetic desires of both patients and physicians.

Many of these are office procedures that carry minimal risk and require little (perhaps a weekend's worth) or no healing time. Botulinum toxin, also known as Botox® Cosmetic™ is one such example.

Botulinum toxin is a purified derivative of a natural substance made by a bacterium called *Clostridium botulinum*. It works both naturally and in the purified form by blocking the release of a substance, called a neurotransmitter, from nerve fibers supplying muscles. These nerve fibers act to cause muscle contraction. Over time, they form wrinkles, because they are attached to the overlying skin. These lines are referred to by physicians as "dynamic" wrinkles, because they are caused by movement.

The idea behind the botulinum toxin injection is to reduce the movement of certain facial muscles to diminish the appearance of their associated wrinkles. Obviously, there is a give and take between preserving expression and eliminating lines. A frozen-looking face is not natural. (You may have seen one or many expressionless stars at the Oscars or the Grammys!) This is why injections should only be given by a doctor who has received special training in this procedure, such as a general plastic surgeon, facial plastic surgeon, or cosmetic dermatologist.

In general, lines on the upper half of

the face — such as forehead, frown lines, and crow's feet — are treated in this manner. However, many patients do not know that lines in the lower aspect of the face are dealt with in another manner entirely. They are treated with a variety

of soft tissue fillers, such as collagen, fascia, hydroxyapatite or hyaluronic acid, to name a few. Yet another reason why you should only trust your face to a medical professional.

Botulinum toxin injections are safe and rapidly performed. Besides certain medications, pregnancy, and neurologic disorders, there are virtually no health issues that would preclude a person from receiving it. Injections are made using extremely small needles in order to minimize pain and treatments usually

take less than 15 minutes. There may be slight redness that lasts about an hour, but there is usually no bruising or pain. Additionally, there are no activity restrictions, limitations, or special instructions which need to be followed. For the patients, essentially, it is back to life immediately (or, back the office, for some).

It takes approximately 3 to 4 days for the medicine to take effect after the treatment has been completed. Results will typically last up to 4 months, after which time repeated injections will be required to reproduce the same effect. As a side benefit, the results are not permanent, and therefore reversible with time if you develop a longing to have your wrinkles back.

As a Board Certified Otolaryngologist and facial plastic and reconstructive surgeon, I am continually pleased with the results that can be obtained with Botox®. It satisfies many of the criteria that today's fast-paced patients desire. It is safe and requires no significant healing time. But, and perhaps most importantly, it works extremely well. This is exceedingly important, because good results not only produce a satisfied patient, but also a patient with a very happy doctor.

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