

BOTOX[®] VS. ASPIRIN

WHICH IS SAFER?

Botox's Uses

Botox[®], the wonder drug of the 21st century, has surged in popularity since its 2002 FDA cosmetic approval. For those unfamiliar with Botox, it is a purified protein derived from botulinum toxin and used cosmetically to temporarily reduce fine lines and wrinkles of the face. Due to its reliable and predictable results, its popularity is unparalleled; over 3 million injections were performed last year, making it the most accepted medical cosmetic agent in the world. Since 1997, there has been an over 3000% increase in its use, but Botox is nothing new. The medical profession has recognized the benefits of Botox since the 1980's. For over 20 years, Botox has been used successfully and safely in cerebral palsy children to control muscle twitches, spasms and excess drooling. Ophthalmologists have used it for over a decade to treat strabismus (wandering eye). Finally, otolaryngologists have injected Botox into voice boxes (the larynx) of stutterers (spasmodic dysphonia).

Recently, it has been FDA approved to treat those with migraine headaches and excess sweating. The medical profession continues to be amazed by all the new applications emerging for Botox. Each month there seems to be a new indication for Botox from bladder and colon spasms to treatment of foul genital odors and ringing in the ears. And the experimentation with Botox continues.

“Botox, when used by an experienced physician, has very limited side effects and just about all of them are reversible once the toxin's effects have worn off.”



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Botox is most notable for its cosmetic use. It works by temporarily inhibiting the signal from the nerve to the muscle, relaxing the muscle and resulting in a reduction of facial wrinkles. The muscle returns to its normal state in about 10-12 weeks. Botox's popularity stems mostly from the impressive results, but also due to the relative ease of the treatment. In fact an argument can be made that Botox is safer than aspirin. If you were to look up the side effect profile of Aspirin in a physician resource book you would be surprised to see all the bad things that can potentially happen if you take aspirin. From breathing disorder to heart arrhythmia and uncontrollable bleeding, Aspirin doesn't appear so safe. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) if taken in excess or with alcohol can cause fatal liver damage. And ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) can be damaging to the lining of the stomach leading to ulcers.



Botox, on the other hand, when used by an experienced physician, has very limited side effects and just about all of them are reversible once the toxin's effects have worn off. The medical profession has experience treating all ages and conditions from children to the elderly in doses much greater than those used cosmetically. And with the popularity, safety profile and indications for Botox's use expanding at such a great rate, even if Botox is not for you cosmetically, don't be surprised if one day your doctor recommends it for a medical condition.

