

Botox – a safe route to looking younger than your years

That tongue-in-cheek comment came from comedienne Lucille Ball in the 1960s. Everyone would still agree with the idea of living honestly. It is also just as wise to eat slowly as it is to eat healthy foods.

But there is no call to follow the I Love Lucy star's advice to lie about your age in the era of Botox Cosmetic and associated, advanced, non-invasive cosmetic treatments.

“The secret to staying youthful is to live honestly, eat slowly and lie about your age.”

Typically, the passing years leave their marks. Those marks may be subtle or more obvious. One of the most direct signs of aging is the look of untreated skin.

Fine lines and furrows deepen. Deeper folds and less elasticity are reminders of time marching on. Finally, you admit to the mirror that you see crows' feet, not laugh lines, and you decide to act and deal with those wrinkles.

Maureen Peters (not her real name) sees looking good as part of her profession. “Because I'm in the beauty industry, I'm incredibly sensitive to how I present myself,” says the 57-year-old makeup artist. “I still have to be relevant to 16-year-olds. That's really important in my job.”

She started her journey of revitalization by visiting the FACE Institute website.

The FACE (Facial Aesthetic Care and Education) website (www.FACEinstitute.ca) was developed — in consultation with Canada's leading cosmetic enhancement physicians — to be a virtual one-stop-information resource for non-surgical cosmetic enhancement. A particularly appealing aspect of the website, say users, is the 'Before and After Visualizer' that shows how a patient would look after a virtual cosmetic treatment.

Physicians say the site is an excellent source of accurate information that gives individuals the chance to make informed decisions. It also has a physician finder, so wherever you are in Canada, you can find a qualified and experienced physician.

As Dr. James Daniel, founder and director of the Carling Laser Clinic in Ottawa, points out, “The FACE Institute is clearly a good starting place for patients, a good touchstone that provides perspective. One of the problems physicians have had is providing the right message to patients and allowing them to make the right decision.”

Dr. Daniel, who is listed on the site, says, “I usually begin by having patients tell me the problem they're trying to solve. Then we work backwards to see what tools we should use for the job.”

He says with the development of facial fillers such as Juvéderm, the treatment tool kit has expanded markedly.

“You now have more tools that work synergistically to give way better results than we ever saw with

individual treatments and procedures,” he says.

“I was really nervous at first,” says Peters, “I didn't want the treatment to look overdone. But I need not have worried. I couldn't believe the difference in my face after having Botox and Juvéderm. I look like I'm in my mid-40s, but it also looks as though I never did anything to my face.”

“If you go to a qualified doctor — which I do — it's safe,” says Peters, referring to her dermatologist, Dr. Fred Weksberg. “He knows my face and knows how I want to look. When I leave the office, I look completely rested, extremely fresh, just as if I have had a vacation. And, there is nothing uncomfortable. It's virtually pain-free. There's no down time.”

Dermal fillers replace the natural elements of the skin — primarily collagen and hyaluronic acid — lost through aging. Juvéderm replenishes lost volume and diminishes facial folds, lines and wrinkles and enhances thinning lips for up to a year, while Botox Cosmetic relaxes facial muscles to smooth wrinkles around the eyes and frown lines for up to four months.

Dr. Daniel concludes by pointing out that Botox, originally used for medical, rather than cosmetic, purposes and first approved by Health Canada almost two decades ago, is “probably one of the most studied molecules today.”

“At last count, there were more than 20 approved indications across more than 75 countries. And what is really striking to me as a physician who has been practising for over 15 years, is that I don't think I have ever prescribed or administered a product that comes close to its efficacy and safety profile.”

Cosmetic Enhancement trends and facts

Botox (botulinum toxin type A) has been extensively researched and widely used for two decades. In Canada, Botox has been available for more than 18 years.

Dr. Jean Carruthers, a Vancouver ophthalmologist, discovered the cosmetic possibilities of Botox.

In 2001, Health Canada approved Botox Cosmetic for the treatment of wrinkles, frown lines and other signs of aging of the skin.

Botox works by blocking the transmission of nerve impulses to the targeted muscle. When the signal is stopped, the muscle relaxes and the skin looks smoother for up to four months — depending on the patient.

Juvéderm is a soft, replenishing dermal filler made from hyaluronic acid (HA), a natural sugar found in the body. Juvéderm replenishes lost volume, diminishes facial lines and wrinkles, and enhances thinning lips. Results are instant, natural looking and can last up to one year.

Recently launched in Canada, Juvéderm with Lidocaine is the only HA facial filler to contain the topical pain reliever, Lidocaine. This helps numb the skin, offering a gentle and comfortable injection experience. This is great news for Canadian women interested in dermal fillers but concerned about the pain associated with needles. (A recent survey^[1] found that nearly a third of Canadian women were most concerned with this.)

Juvéderm can also be used with Botox Cosmetic to replace volume lost due to aging and fill out thinning lips, facial wrinkles and folds.

Botox Cosmetic and Juvéderm are safe when administered by a trained, experienced health provider.

[1] Leger Marketing survey of 455 women aged 30 to 60 across Canada conducted between April 2, 2008, and April 9, 2008, with a margin of error of +/- 4.6%, 19 times out of 20.



Before



After

Photos Courtesy of Dr. Jessica Wu

Combination treatment of Juvéderm and Botox Cosmetic.

Trends in non-surgical cosmetic treatments

The dream is to look the best you can be—naturally

And that dream is within easy reach, says Dr. Caroline Tosoni, medical director of Synergy Advanced Medical Aesthetics in Ottawa, which she co-owns with her husband, David Eves.

“The art of our industry is working with people as they are now,” she says. “We are not trying to make 50-year-old women look like 20-year-old starlets with huge lips. They don't want that. They really want to look natural, simply better for their age.”

Most women are not looking for changes in their appearance that are too obvious, agrees Dr. Martin Braun of the Vancouver Laser & Skin Care Centre.

“A little Botox, a little Juvéderm, a photo facial for brown and red spots can really take 10 years off, but you still look like who you are,” he says. “No one wants to be part of the one-syringe-too-many club.”

The main aim, says Dr. Arthur Swift of Montreal, is to “strive to release a person's maximum beauty. Every face has an innate beauty.”

The principle behind the rejuvenation procedures is to restore proportion to the face, he says, keeping a balanced, natural appearance. This is achieved partly by using Botox to relax the surface of the skin and reduce lines and partly by using fillers to restore lost volume.

“Younger people have full cheeks. As we get older, we lose that volume. It drops to the jowl area, so that we look more squarish. If you restore volume, you bring back the triangle of youth — the proportion that is pleasing to the eye.”

“Everything has to be in harmony,” emphasizes Dr. Braun, who has used Botox for cosmetic and medical reasons on himself and members of his family.

For dermatologist Dr. Don Groot of the Groot DermaSurgery Centre in Edmonton, who has been in practice for 35 years, the ability to use products such as Botox for either cosmetic or medical purposes is of particular importance.

“With Botox, we started using it for medical reasons and then for cosmetic

reasons. You have to be open-minded. The people I see that are using Botox and Juvéderm for cosmetic reasons are very happy.”

In terms of cosmetic procedures, the emphasis today is on the overall regeneration of the face without much interruption to a patient's routine, says Dr. Tosoni.

“This is a great time in our history because we have options that are not dramatic,” she says. “Patients don't have to go through plastic surgery. Most people want treatments to remain private. That's why they appreciate the natural aspects of the procedures and the latest advances in cosmetic treatments with minimal downtime. And there is a great synergy between different approaches of using Botox for the relaxation of dynamic wrinkles, furrowed brows and crows' feet and the fillers to recapture loss of volume.”

She adds that she has also noticed that today's patients are much better informed than patients of a few years ago.

“When I started my practice eight years ago, most people would know very little. Women today are much more informed and cognizant of options. They recognize that you can't just treat one area of the skin for overall rejuvenation of the face. They know what they want in terms of treatment and results.”

However, she adds, there are still myths about Botox.

“In fact, if it's used by a licensed, qualified physician with the proper training, side effects are very, very rare. I think it's also important to know that it's been used successfully in medical fields on children as young as three years of age and medical dosages are a lot higher than cosmetic dosages.”

Dr. Braun says he “can't think of a safer drug.” Dr. Swift points out that the “excellent safety profile” of Botox has been proven by its successful use in over 15 million treatment sessions worldwide over the last 18 years.