

allure

Injectables: Fact or Fiction?



There's no denying that more and more people are getting cosmetic injections—botulinum toxin injections alone (Botox, Dysport) **increased a whopping 759 percent between 2000 and 2015**. But despite their growing popularity, there's still a lot of contradictory information surrounding these beauty shots.

“Everyone knows about injectables, but lots of people come in with preconceived notions,” says New York City dermatologist Paul Jarrod Frank. To help clear up the confusion, here's the real deal on what's true and what's an urban (beauty) legend.

1. FACT: Injectables can have a preventative, anti-aging effect.

There is, in fact, some truth to the idea that injections work prophylactically—it's not just marketing mumbo-jumbo. Take botulinum toxin, for example. By paralyzing the muscle, you're preventing dynamic wrinkles (those caused by the muscle contractions), and ensuring that existing lines and wrinkles don't become deeper, according to dermatologist Whitney Bowe, an associate clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. Hyaluronic acid fillers also have proven long-term, anti-aging benefits. A **2007 study from the University of Michigan** showed that the injection of non-animal-derived, stabilized hyaluronic acid (found in fillers such as Restylane and Juvéderm) stimulated collagen production. “None of this means that you should start getting injections at age 19. The time to start is when something starts to bother you, but it's good to know that it's not only therapeutic but will also prevent wrinkle development over time,” adds Frank.

2. FICTION: Getting injected will make you look like you've had "work" done. "It's not what's done, it's how it's done," says Frank. "You only notice the bad work." The overly taut, terrifyingly smooth foreheads of Hollywood starlets or bizarrely large duck lips of reality housewives are examples of excess. "There are too many examples of people who accidentally or purposely look like they had too much work done," says Frank. To maintain a natural appearance, it's about rejuvenating your looks, not making you look different. Find an injector who is experienced and understands anatomy and the natural proportions of the face, and no one has to know that you've gone under the needle.

3. FICTION: There's a set amount of time that each injectable lasts.

"People believe there's a set time limit, but that's the biggest misconception. Articles and ads make sure to say 'it lasts up to,'" says Frank. It's not a hard-and-fast guarantee that the same will hold true for you. It simply means that when it was being tested, this was the longest it lasted. Many factors affect the longevity of the results, including which product is used and where it's injected in the face. Rather than getting hung up on a set time frame, Frank suggests focusing on when you notice the effects starting to wear off and use that as a guideline. And it's better to come in more frequently for subtle tweaks rather than book a yearly appointment where you do more. "Not only does this make for a more natural result, but it also spreads out the cost and minimizes any trauma to your face." And when it comes to toxin injections, if you initially do them more frequently, you'll eventually be able to use less and go longer in between, says Bowe: "If you go every three months the first year, you start to lose that muscle memory that creates the wrinkle. Over time, you'll be able to stretch it out to every four or six months."

4. FACT: These products are safe.

It's understandable how the idea of deliberately injecting a known toxin into your body can seem dangerous. But botulinum toxin was first approved by the FDA in 1989 to treat crossed eyes and spasms of the eyelid, and it's been used cosmetically for almost three decades. "People also worry about allergies, but you're more likely to have a reaction to a vitamin or a tea that you buy in a natural-food store," says Bowe, who says an allergy to neurotoxin is rare (though she adds that anyone with extensive drug allergies should be sure to mention this to their injector). And fillers like Restylane, Juvéderm, and Belotero use a stabilized form of hyaluronic acid, a sugar molecule. To further ensure your safety, however, it's essential to only go to reputable and well-trained dermatologists and plastic surgeons who are using the actual, FDA-approved products. To that point...

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5. FACT: You get what you pay for.

Now is not the time to bargain-shop. While many factors affect costs, at the end of the day, there's no denying that these products are expensive, says Frank. "When you see deals and bargain prices for injectables, you're either getting diluted product or the injector isn't making money off of it. And if they're not making any money off of it, they're likely just using you as practice as they try and build a practice," he cautions. Bottom line: Steer clear of Internet deals or steep discounts for any kind of cosmetic injection. Discuss your budget with your dermatologist or plastic surgeon and ask about the variation in pricing amongst the different brands, but be ready to pay up.