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Grooming



# Give Your Face to Science

As skin-care treatments grow more and more extreme—and increasingly targeted to men—Garrett Munce gets poked, prodded, peeled, plucked, pricked, and pummeled in the name of smoother cheeks and leaner jowls

• **MY ADVENTURES** ON the fringes of grooming began when I was just shy of 30 and a facialist asked if I'd ever considered Botox. "For preventative purposes," he said, trying not to crush my already fragile self-esteem. I shrugged it off at the time, but the more I thought about it, the easier the choice seemed. Either I could take perfect care of my skin by never smoking, squinting, frowning, eating junk food, or going outside, or I could get a little bitty shot in the forehead.

Look, I realize most guys aren't quite so willing to suffer for their skin. Some don't even moisturize, which to me comes as naturally as breathing (or smoking, or frowning). But at least

400,000 men a year try Botox, and plenty of us don't stop there. **New York cosmetic dermatologist Paul Jarrod Frank says men now make up 35 percent of his massive client base.** In the name of age-reversing Benjamin Button-style results, otherwise-reasonable guys are lining up for hard-core treatments using equipment apparently salvaged from a hardware store.

In the past year, I've pretty much tried them all. Some don't work. But a lot of them do—and they're no more invasive than other cosmetic procedures you probably accept without hesitation. Would you have an unsightly mole removed? Would you whiten or straighten your teeth? Of course you would. Face

stuff is really no different. And there's a procedure out there for everybody.

One of my personal favorites, **micro-needling** (\$695), uses a motorized mallet affixed with 16 tiny needles—a medieval mace of vanity. A specialist rubs the business end all over your face and then kneads a vitamin-enriched, collagen-replenishing goo deep into your skin via the tiny holes she's poked in your epidermis. I left my first session feeling like a tenderized steak, with redness and mild irritation that lasted about 24 hours. But soon my face looked tight and bright, lit from within, as if my skin were stretched over a lightbulb.

It got even freakier when I tried **cryogenics** (\$55), which meant someone blasted my head for six minutes with a Shop-Vac full of freezing air. Uh, how refreshing? It did virtually nothing for my skin, though I will say that a separate total-body cryo treatment (in which I entered what was essentially an iron lung and endured three minutes at negative 220 degrees Fahrenheit) at least made me feel euphoric all day long.

I got better (and warmer) results from a **probiotic peel** (\$200), which involved a gentle cleansing and an application of vitamins and acids. Instead of sloughing off layers of skin like a python, it used bacteria to "purge" my skin from the inside, removing buildup and making my face look clearer and healthier. I also liked **electric micro-current** (\$250). After exfoliating my face, my technician fired up an electrified wand and rubbed it all over the left side of my grill to contract my face muscles, then held up a mirror to show me the progress. While the right half of my face looked blotchy, sullen, and tired, the left half appeared tight, firm, and alert, with seemingly higher cheekbones, no under-eye bags, and not even a hint of a jowl. I was a walking, talking before-and-after.

Still, even after all these treatments, the one I know I'll continue is preventative **Botox** (\$300), which (doctors agree!) really can fend off wrinkles before they appear. I've come to think of Botox as the weed of non-invasive aesthetics: It's relatively low-risk, and if more people than you think have done it, that's because it does the job so well. For plenty of people, it's enough. I just happen to prefer the harder stuff. ❌

*GARRETT MUNCE is a GQ fashion editor. He thanks Mashell Tabe, Dan Ahoubim, Melissa Doft, Kryolife, and Joanna Vargas for the many things they did to his face.*

