

Where do you stand on THE DEBATE

The votes for and against cosmetic injectables continue to stack up.

Is a woman vain or downright insane to pay for facial injections, or should we do whatever it takes to keep the wrinkles at bay?

Good Housekeeping's beauty directors go head to head on one of beauty's biggest controversies

that's
dividing
women
today?

NO THANKS

SAYS SUZANNE DUCKETT

First the confession: I have had injectables. Specifically, botulinum toxin (often known by one of its trade names, Botox). Only twice, but enough to experience the rush of happiness you get five days after the paralyzing effects have kicked in and you wake up a smoother, fresher, less tired and crumpled version of you.

My aversion isn't based on any moral argument, though I do raise an eyebrow (because I still can) at women who have 'regular work' - as it's now referred to - like it's the norm. Are they really so obsessed with getting older that they're prepared to have their faces injected regularly with a paralyzing poison? Apparently so. According to the British Association of Cosmetic Doctors, demand for non-surgical cosmetic procedures soared in 2010. Most popular were botulinum toxin injections and volumising fillers, up 30% in just a year.

Admittedly I am a bit of a worrier, which is why I had a stab with botulinum toxin to get rid of the pesky frown line that started appearing in my early 20s and has taken years of contemplation to cultivate. But I'm loath to have more of it for many reasons. First, what's wrong with expression lines? That forehead furrow is an indication that I'm thinking - it's become my stress/happiness/taking-life-too-seriously

YES PLEASE

SAYS EVE CAMERON

Before I had Botox, I was neither pro nor anti it - or the women who chose to have it. Each to their own, I said. Then about five years ago, I was asked to write about the muscle-relaxing injections and tried them in the name of research.

And I loved the effect. The treatments softened the rather deep horizontal lines in my forehead and the little frown line between my brows that always made me look tired. They also gave my eyebrows and upper lids a subtle lift. Since then, I've been back to my man with the needle, Dr Patrick Bowler, three times a year, every year, for more.

It's good stuff in the right hands. Problems can occur when too much is injected into the wrong area, which is why going to an experienced practitioner is essential, though it's worth knowing that botulinum toxin does get broken down naturally in around four months - so an adverse side-effect, such as an eye droop, is usually temporary. Clearly there can be complications and allergies in some cases (trawl the internet and you'll find them), but cosmetic doses are minute, and I've never seen any evidence that makes me concerned about continuing to have the injections. Rest assured that if I did, I would



NO THANKS

barometer. When it's the first thing I see glaring back at me in the mirror, I know it's time to step back from unnecessary pressures. I'll do some yoga, book Environ skincare company's Frown Treatment and blur that line from inside out. How can you read the signs if someone erases them?

Also, I worry about the commitment these cosmetic injectables involve. People I know who used to go once or twice a year now go three times. Treatments can cost anything from £300 to £2,000, depending on where you have them done. And then there's the emotional side - I believe that when people are constantly trying to improve the outside, it's usually the inside that could do with some attention.

Chinese doctor and skin expert John Tsagaris warns: 'Botulinum has an expiry date. It's temporary.' He also believes that, to get the same 'wow' effect as a first treatment, many practitioners would need to up the amount they use. I prefer the skin doctors who aim to see patients less often as time goes on, rather than more. John's beauty acupuncture uses an alternative approach (including lots of needles!) to boost skin health and healing. A steady stream of ex-injectables fans - including myself - now beat a path to his door.

I also heed the words of facialist Emma Hardie, another complementary beauty guru, who can transform and rejuvenate skin with her bare hands. 'Anything that immobilises parts of your face could cause skin to constrict and interfere with its natural regeneration process,' she says. 'And in the long term, this could even accelerate ageing. People think erasing a line or two will make them look younger and better,' Emma says. 'It doesn't. Having good tone, luminosity and healthy, malleable flesh will make your complexion look brighter, plumper and younger. Injections won't give you that - and they may hinder it.'

And where do you draw the line? Surely if you paralyse a facial muscle or two here, you need to paralyse another bunch there. Then the frown line may be less obvious but now your crow's feet are seriously squawking. And what about that craggy neck? The list could go on and on...

Refurbing faces is no different from doing up houses - the 'work' is never finished. Botulinum toxin is akin to signing a deal with the devil in exchange for youth, and I, for one, am not entirely clear about the payback further down the line. □

'Refurbing faces is no different from doing up houses - the "work" is never finished'

SUZANNE

'Personally I don't think there's anything wrong with investing in the way you look'

EVE

YES PLEASE

stop - I am not a natural risk taker. Besides, there can also be positive side-effects. My treatments really help reduce the headaches I have suffered from for years.

What I find curious, however, is just how worked up people get about these cosmetic injections. It'll seep into your brain, they say (because they've read the tabloid story that conveniently misinterprets a study on rodents to deliver a shocker of a headline). Or they will tut-tut at the vanity of it all.

Personally, I don't think there's anything wrong with investing in the way you look - though obviously if it's all you think about, you should probably try investing some time in improving your personality, too. And, on the subject of obsession, some women also caution that a shot of botulinum toxin puts you on a slippery slope to becoming a cosmetic-surgery junkie. But there is no statistical evidence for this. Just because some celebs have too much cosmetic work, it doesn't mean that Mrs Average who seeks some line-smoothing will descend into a debt-ridden, freak-faced hell.

What is interesting are a couple of studies that say botulinum toxin interferes with your ability to interpret and express emotions. One explained that we react to the emotions of others by making subconscious tiny mimicking expressions of their facial expressions to help us process their feelings. So if you can't do that - because your muscles won't move - it's suggested you can't empathise properly. Other research claims if you can't facially express an emotion such as anger (as treatment stops you frowning and pulling a really angry face), you won't feel it, as facial muscles and brain are linked.

I don't think I am less empathetic (or cranky!) as a result of my injections, but I do know they are a magic bullet as far as anti-ageing goes - making me look fresher, a little younger and, as a result, more confident. Some buy expensive shoes and bags, some spend money on their gardens - my spare cash goes on the Botox. □

BOTULINUM: THE FACTS

Sometimes used as an umbrella term, Botox is actually a trade name for one brand of botulinum toxin (like Hoover and vacuuming). If you're not familiar with how it works, botulinum toxin is injected into the facial muscles where it blocks the release of the chemical

messenger that sends the signal from the nerve to the muscle. This stops the muscle from performing its task. Repetitive muscle movements in some areas of the face cause expression lines, so it follows that reducing muscle movement minimises the lines.

