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PREVENTATIVE MEASURES: Why Some Women Get Botox in Their 20's

SKIN | 01.23.15 by Jessica Hagy

My name is Jessica, I am 26 years old, and I have one forehead with two wrinkles on it. One (whom I've named Ethel) is a deep line that slices horizontally across my forehead. The other is a flirty little, still-developing whisper of a crease directly above my right eyebrow.

If your wrinkle count is higher, I know what you're thinking: "Please, stop complaining." I get it. In thirty years I'll be peeling my skin off and wishing for the days when I could count wrinkles. But, if you're new to the wrinkle game like me, you might understand my complete fixation with these newfound lines. As a non-smoking, water-obsessed, sometimes-healthy eating, beauty product-addict, I've been slathering serums and sunscreen on my mug for years, and frankly I'm a little pissed that these deep lines are already entering the equation. Yes, I know my way around a bottle of pinot noir and I used to lay in the tanning beds before prom in high school (sigh), but shouldn't wrinkles be something reserved for your thirties and beyond?

Apparently not. Which is why many 20-somethings like myself are considering a cosmetic trend known as "preventative Botox." When my obsession with my lines got too hard to handle, I decided to reach out to a professional (Dr. Jody Levine, a dermatologist in N.Y.C. and National Medical Director of AOB Med Spa), and get the real skinny on whether these preventative measures work.



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Here's what she had to say...



PHOTO: Imaxtree

The Basics

Levine filled me in on the concept behind preventative Botox: "Since frown lines, crows' feet, and expression wrinkles are due to repetitive folding of the skin, people have realized that by injecting earlier, you can keep them from happening in the first place, rather than attempting to fix them after they've developed. Slowing down the use of these muscles early in adult life will prevent the lines from developing."

And it's not just brows that are getting Botoxed. According to Levine, "One area in particular that I like to treat, preventatively, is the mouth angles. By injecting Botox at the muscles that control the downturn of the sides of the mouth—a motion we do not need to do—one can prevent the formation of marionette lines, which, once they form, are very hard to treat."



PHOTO: Imaxtree

The Right Time to Start

So, if the goal is prevention, how early should one start treatments? "At whatever point patients begin to notice or are bothered by frown lines, forehead lines, etc., it is reasonable to consider starting treatments. If someone is starting to notice fine lines coming through and they really want to prevent them from turning into larger folds, they are your ideal Botox patient," Levine advised.

When pressed for a more specific age, Levine said, "Botox is FDA approved and available for patients 18 and older. Most patients typically start using Botox at age 30, some even in their mid-twenties. It is possible to benefit from preventative Botox treatments starting as early as 25 but before that, the odds are low that you could have built up enough lines to worry about."



The Drawbacks

But, uh, isn't starting Botox at 25 going to be kind of... expensive? According to Levine, yes. As she explained, "Many critics point to the potentially exorbitant cost of starting such procedures at an early age. It is very important to protect your skin from the sun by applying sunscreen, wearing a hat when outside, getting plenty of rest, and doing activities to reduce stress, such as yoga. Botox, when mixed with healthy lifestyle choices such as these can all help to reduce and prevent wrinkles."

Finally, I wondered why some people with Botox actually looked older? According to Levine, it's because their face has seen a few too many needles. "More is not always better," she said. "Overuse of the drug can lead to atrophy of the muscles, which can be particularly noticeable around the eyes, where the face can appear inadvertently aged, despite the lack of wrinkles."

So, would you consider preventative Botox to stop wrinkles in their tracks? Or are you more of a skincare naturalist that's avoiding the needles?



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