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# Embracing BOTOX



Anti-ageing isn't the sole purpose of the botox needle - the procedure can remedy a whole host of health conditions as well

For those who suffer from a long-term condition that interferes with their daily lives, finding a solution can be a long and exhaustive process. As such, it was no wonder that migraine sufferers the world over were rejoicing in the recent news that a study confirmed botox can greatly reduce the frequency of their headaches. Yet the aesthetic treatment has received mixed reviews throughout its lifetime.

Ever since its beginning, botox has been shrouded in controversy. Used by many a celebrity's surgeon, and increasingly us 'normal folk', Botulinum Toxin type A, as it is more scientifically known, has become a household name as a method to combat the signs of ageing. But tales of client addiction and horror stories of 'botched' jobs, not to mention its superficial promotion of the anti-ageing process, has paved a rather rocky path to success for the treatment. In fact, its origin as an aid to various health conditions has not gained as much publicity as its cosmetic uses.

Pioneered in the 1960's by Alan Scott, an ophthalmologist from San Francisco, botox, comprised of three types of bacteria, was introduced to serve therapeutic purposes. In 1980, after approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Scott began to administer botox to humans for conditions such as blepharospasm (uncontrollable blinking) and strabismus (crossed eyes). In 1989, it was manufactured by Allergan Ltd. and sold to the mass market for the treatment of those conditions discovered by Scott.

Today, blepharospasm is still treated by botox, as well as migraines, cervical dystonia, hyperhidrosis and bladder weakness. So how does it actually remedy these conditions?

“Pioneered in the 1960's, botox was introduced to serve therapeutic purposes”



## MIGRAINES

Approved in 2010 by drug regulators, botox has recently been confirmed as an effective aid to migraines. In a study conducted by Granada University, in Spain, it was proven that botox can be employed

to lessen the frequency and severity of migraines. Featured in the World Health Organisation's top 20 disabling conditions, it is thought that 700,000 people in the UK suffer from migraines.

In order to treat the condition, botox is administered over 12 weeks by multiple injections around the head and neck, or the 'trigger points', where it is claimed that the solution blocks the transmission path from the nerves to the brain.

Tracey Wilson, 40, from Kent, was diagnosed with chronic migraine (headaches for 15 days or more a month) five years ago, after giving birth to twins. She says, "It is only now, via experience, that I have learnt that migraine is a lifelong condition and you need to change your life to suit it. I had my first course of botox a week ago which consisted of 31 injections and lasted 30 minutes. I was a bit sore for a few days afterwards (shoulders, neck, forehead) but it's been five days now and things have finally begun to settle down. I have not had a lot of aura since, but it's still early days. I was told in 3-14 days the effects will kick in."

There are many clinics across the UK which offer the treatment and your GP should be able to recommend an accredited centre.

Further information: [www.migraine.org.uk](http://www.migraine.org.uk), [www.migraine.trust.org](http://www.migraine.trust.org)

## HYPERHIDROSIS

**H**yperhidrosis, or excessive sweating, can put a great pressure on a sufferer's self-confidence. Known to affect 2-3% of Westerners, the condition can make people feel miserable and embarrassed. Botox can serve to counteract hyperhidrosis by binding to the nerves that control sweating in the skin and blocking the nerve endings. Thus, all areas prone to perspiration, such as the face, hands, feet and underarms can be targeted by the botox needle up to 25 times per area, lasting approximately 15-20 minutes and causing minor pain. One course of botox can maintain these effects for up to eight months and clinical studies have shown that it can reduce sweating (frequency and amount) by 75-80%.

Possible side-effects resulting from the treatment can include temporary headaches, nausea or flu-like symptoms.

Prices range from £300 up to £400 for a single course, dependent on the size of the surface area targeted. Celebrities, such as glamour model Danielle Lloyd and singer Liz McClarnon, are reported to swear by regular treatments to combat sweat on the red carpet.

Further information: [www.hyperhidrosis.org.uk](http://www.hyperhidrosis.org.uk)



Did you know...

Botox is the fastest growing cosmetic treatment in the UK and USA, increasing in usage by a staggering 3,614% since 1997



## BLEPHAROSPASM



**B**lepharospasm concerns the involuntary action of closing the eyelids or blinking uncontrollably. While severity of the condition can vary, it can limit a person's undertaking of various day-to-day activities, such as reading and driving.

Administered in sites above and below the eyes, studies have shown that 90% of patients have found it to relieve their blepharospasm. Like all other treatments, courses have to be repeated after a time period in order to be effective, typically three to six months. The dosage of botox for blepharospasm differs in accordance with severity, with higher dosages (measured in units) applied to more extreme cases. Common side effects can include temporary blurred vision, bruising around the eye and light sensitivity.

Forums such as [Blepharospasm.org](http://Blepharospasm.org) allow sufferers to share their experiences with others. There is an evidently positive outlook on botox as a treatment; Judy, from Toronto, describes her using of botox as "a life saver" and Andrea, from Yorkshire, says she "wouldn't be functional without it."

Further information: [www.blepharospasm.org](http://www.blepharospasm.org)

Find out what our expert had to say

## CERVICAL DYSTONIA



Affecting the neck and occasionally the shoulders, cervical dystonia involves the involuntary contraction and abnormal movement of the muscles, as well as awkward head/neck positioning. This can cause severe pain and discomfort.

Approved since 2000, botox relaxes the muscles responsible by injecting two to six of them and freezing them into hibernation. Effects usually take hold after several days of the treatment, lasting three to four months before the next course. Optimal results may not be fully achieved until after a few courses. Side effects can

range from headaches and drowsiness, to minor muscle weakness.

After a diagnosis of cervical dystonia by a specialist doctor, request an electromyogram (EMG) to determine the muscles that require treating.

## BLADDER WEAKNESS

Botox injections into the bladder wall can wave goodbye to incontinence. A study at Guy's and King's College in London, in 2009, whereby sufferers were injected, proved that better sleep, more energy and greater self-confidence resulted from botox after a period of 24 weeks.

The botox injections work by paralysing the muscles that usually contract uncontrollably. Taking effect in the matter of seven days, the injections are repeated regularly with results lasting for approximately six to twelve months. What's more, the muscles it targets have the ability to be re-trained, so a single course of botox can even stem bladder weakness altogether. The method

is completed in the space of 10-15 minutes using a cystoscope which injects 20-30 sites of your bladder and only requires a local anaesthetic. While side effects can include abdominal pain, diarrhoea, light-headedness, mild fever and headaches, these are usually only temporary.

Further information: [www.bladderweakness.org.uk](http://www.bladderweakness.org.uk), [www.uk.depend.com](http://www.uk.depend.com)



## THE EXPERT

gives their verdict...



**Chantalle Coombes, 30, heads botox centre Sugar Box Clinic in Newport, South Wales**

([www.dermalfillersnewport.com](http://www.dermalfillersnewport.com))

“I currently only use botox as an aid to hyperhidrosis, but I intend to use it to treat migraines in the future. People who suffer from problems like these can really benefit psychologically. Of course, there are side-effects to be aware of prior to treatment, which can depend on the client and point of injection. For example, facial botox treatments can cause eyebrow ptosis (sagging), although this is rare, and occasional headaches. As botox stops the messages being sent to the brain in order to help muscle contraction, it can spread to adjacent muscles and cause muscle weakness. There are also potential side-effects from the trauma of the needle, including itching, tenderness, swelling and bruising.

Altogether, I would say the pros far outweigh the cons when treating a health condition with botox. The fact that you can go about your everyday life without the worry of an aching neck, extreme sweating or a painful head is definitely advantageous. Botox is coming to the fore as a remedy to health issues due to client education via the internet and the number of practitioners leaving the NHS to become independent.

If you would like to try botox, consult your GP first and foremost. Botox will only be administered to otherwise healthy individuals, who are not pregnant or breastfeeding.”