

Get ahead at work – try ‘Boytox’
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Middle-aged men are going under the needle to get a 'poker-face', says Danielle Gusmaroli

In the quest for eternal youth, men are finally catching up with women. The modern male has now discovered a weapon that females have had in their armoury for more than a decade: the Botox injection.

Since its launch in Britain almost 14 years ago, Botox has become the fastest-growing treatment in the cosmetics industry. Marketed as a quick anti-ageing fix, it is used by 100,000 Britons a year. And according to statistics published last week by Transform, Britain's leading cosmetic surgery group, a fifth of all patients are now men.

In the past 12 months, there's been a 50 per cent increase in male patients signing up for the treatment. The Harley Medical Group, which has 11 clinics nationwide, says 45 per cent of its clients requesting such non-surgical treatment are male, mostly from "metrosexual" centres such as London, Manchester and Brighton. Botox for men is such big business that it's even got a nickname: Boytox.

The growing acceptance among men has been fuelled by celebrities.

"Botox is no more unusual than toothpaste," says X-Factor judge Simon Cowell, 48. "It works. You do it once a year. Who cares?" Certainly not Cliff Richard, 67, Donny Osmond, 49, or Peter Andre, 35, who have all admitted to some muscle-freezing jabs. Male executives are not taking to lunchtime injections in greater numbers just to smooth away the signs of ageing. The treatment - which contains botulinum toxin-A, a bacterial nerve poison that causes a serious form of food poisoning known as botulism - reduces elasticity in the forehead. This makes men look more inscrutable, which enhances their authority in the boardroom. Apparently, the same "freezing" effect that gives some women a startled appearance leaves men with a poker-faced assertiveness. You need never lose a contract or game of cards again.

Growing ranks of male devotees say a couple of injections is enough to erase one's "tells", those barely noticeable twitches that reveal when someone is bluffing. Consultant plastic surgeon Simon Withey from the London Plastic Surgery Associates says: "The pressure to not look past one's sell-by-date is intense. Men want a strong image and this is a subtle way of getting rid of that exhausted or angry look. I treat plenty of City types who want to look younger because they feel the pressure of hordes of younger people behind them ready to take their place."

It takes two injections to iron out lines around the eyes, while up to four shots can freeze the forehead. Effects are visible within 48 hours, but it can take five days to see the difference, which can last six months.

David Seward, 40, managing director for an advertising agency in Leeds, went for his latest session last year. "I work in a young person's industry and started to feel frayed around the edges. We sell electronic games, and in meetings I felt old talking-up products. When I first had Botox, friends laughed. But the second time, no one batted an eyelid. If Simon Cowell does it, why can't I?"

Peter Rosenfeld, 44, who runs BusyBus, a sightseeing tour company in Chester, had Botox last summer to help him over a mid-life crisis. "My wife and I divorced three years ago. I was dating but had lost confidence and found myself lying about my age. A few days after I had it done, a miracle happened. I looked in the mirror and I was 10 years younger. People mistake me for someone in their mid-thirties. These days, I can flirt with confidence."

David Franks, 42, director of a commercial property firm in London, first had Botox three years ago. He now has three injection sessions a year. "In commercial markets, you are always having to keep up with the young. If you can take a tablet for a headache, why not take something for wrinkles that is straightforward, simple, and has no side effects?"

The British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons says, when used "appropriately", Botox is safe - but the treatment's beginnings were far from benign. First developed by Dr Edward Schantz in 1946, it was intended as a tool in biological warfare. But Schantz found that when injected into a patient with neck muscles in spasm, the activity stopped. In 1962, American doctors used it to treat twitchy eyes, noticing in the process that patients' crow's feet also vanished.

An estimated 20,000 high-street beauty centres and private dentist surgeries offer the treatments