

procedure OF THE month



BOTOX

Ever wonder what all the hype around Botox is about? We gave in to curiosity and found out.

In a recent interview on TV chat show *Chelsea Lately*, on coming clean about cosmetic surgery, Sharon Osbourne referred to Nicole Kidman's forehead as looking 'like a flatscreen TV'. That's what most people assume Botox does – remove all movement from the face and leave a forehead flat enough to reflect light to the moon. Despite this perception, my only trepidation in lying back on Dr Melanie Lambrechts's injecting bed at her Centre of Wellness practice in Jozi, is that my first dose of Botox would hurt. It turns out that it doesn't – I've had more painful eyebrow waxes.

As with any appointment with a new doctor, I first had to fill out a patient information sheet, listing all allergies, medication and recent surgeries. I had to include any supplements taken because, as she pointed out, certain supplements like omega-3 fatty acids and St John's Wort thin your blood, causing you to bleed more, so you do need to tell your doctor.

After discussing my concerns she asked me to frown, raise my eyebrows and then smile, while she marked my forehead with a make-up pencil. This allowed her to look at the unique way my face moves and ensure she injected Botox into the right places. She decided to inject two sites near my hairline at the top of the muscles which allow me to raise my eyebrows, as this would allow me to keep some movement in my forehead and avoid that 'flatscreen TV' effect. She also marked along the top of my eyebrow ridge, which is what gives frown lines; at the outer edges of my eyebrow to create an arch in the brows; and lastly, around my crow's feet, to soften those expression lines.

Surprisingly, the whole injecting procedure is over in minutes. It's also quite painless, due in part to the ultra-fine needles used (imagine the feeling of a mosquito piercing your skin). However, if you are concerned about pain, Dr Lambrechts applies an over-the-counter topical anaesthetic called Emla, which takes 10–15 minutes to start working. If your doctor doesn't offer it, you can buy a tube yourself and apply before your appointment.

Turns out the injecting is the easy part – it gets complicated later on. Because Botox can migrate, I was advised not to lie down for four hours, and banned for a full 24 hours from any cardiovascular workouts, exercise where I would lie down or raise my legs (forget about yoga classes), and salon treatments, especially if it involved lying down or massaging the face.

It's also not advisable to rub the face

excessively or, if you've had Botox for bunny lines (those lines that occur on the bridge of the nose when smiling), you shouldn't wear sunglasses for the rest of the day.

The effects don't immediately kick in. It takes four days before you start feeling immobilisation. Botox works by blocking the nerve impulses that cause muscles to contract, and by day four I could feel a distinct lack of the ability to operate what doctors refer to as the 'frown complex'. By day five the effects were more pronounced and my outer brow felt lifted. The sensation was as if someone had attached tape to the arch of my eyebrows, lifted and repositioned them, and then stuck down the tape. I quickly grew used to – and liked – the sensation of my eyes being open wider.

There are some downsides to having Botox. Fortunately, I only developed one light bruise near my right eye. Some people bruise more, particularly around the eyes because there are many capillaries in this area, but these are risks that were outlined to me during the consultation.

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The cost depends on how much Botox the doctor uses. Doctors charge per unit and because I don't have an excessively mobile, expressive face, Dr Lambrechts used fewer units than typical. My procedure cost R2160, whereas some women could expect to pay over R3000 to do their forehead, brows and crow's feet. Because men have stronger facial muscles and need more units of Botox to achieve the same effect, they can expect to pay R4000–R6000 for the same procedure. Effects last for three to four months. With continued use, effects wear off more slowly and treatments can also be spaced six months apart.

These days you might see a shadow of my former cross face, but only if you're paying close attention. ❖

Don't want Botox? Try these...

1. Skin Doctors Relaxaderm Advance, R695
2. Ren Keep Young and Beautiful SH2C Serum, R675
3. IQMS Medicosmetics Formula Forte Serum, R4300
4. Elizabeth Arden Ceramide Plump Perfect Ultra Lift and Firm Eye Cream, R345



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