

A Beginner's Guide to Injections: 6 Things to Consider Before Going Under the Needle

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According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, there were nearly 7 million injections of neurotoxin last year, and nearly 2.5 million filler injections, making them the top two most popular minimally invasive cosmetic procedures in the U.S. Thinking about adding to those numbers? Before you make an appointment, read these six important factors to keep in mind before picking up the phone.



1. Who's behind the needle.

"Ninety percent of the success of these kinds of cosmetic treatments depends on who is doing them," explains dermatologist Whitney Bowe, clinical assistant professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital. "The remaining 10 percent is dependent on the product." (More on that later.) Think of it this way: If you got a bad haircut, would you blame the scissors or your stylist? Bowe says word of mouth is the best way to find an injector. If you know someone who looks amazing (and you know they've gone

under the needle), ask who they go to. But with so many people offering Botox and other injections these days (dentists, gynos, your neighbor and her biannual Botox party), it's also extremely important to inquire about credentials, cautions [Ava Shamban](#), Beverly Hills dermatologist and author of *Heal Your Skin*. He or she doesn't necessarily have to be a full-fledged doctor, as it's common for many registered nurses to do injections. But be sure to ask how long they've been doing aesthetic injections and how they were trained. Also helpful: Ask to see before-and-after pictures of their patients, not just those from a brochure for the product. Once you've found someone promising, don't rush. Book an appointment for a consultation first. That gives you the opportunity to discuss your desires and expectations, and to take some time to think about it before you return for the actual procedure.

2. Your budget.

You get what you pay for when it comes to cosmetic injections. While prices vary depending on the exact product used and where you live, fillers typically range from \$500 to \$2,000 per syringe, while botulinum toxin starts at approximately \$300 and up

per treatment. In other words, a Groupon deal for \$50 Botox is a red flag you might end up on an episode of *Botched*. (Shady practices include diluting the product so that it's not as effective—unethical in terms of misrepresenting what's being sold—and illegally purchasing black-market knockoffs from China.) At your consultation, discuss your budget and see if it's in line with what your injector suggests. "Patients come in having saved enough money for one injection, but often they need more than that," says Bowe. "You'll get the best results if you wait until you can afford to pay for a comprehensive treatment."

3. Your expectations.

Even if you really want Blake's cheekbones or Angelina's lips, bringing pics of your favorite celeb's features isn't particularly helpful. "Find a photo of yourself where you love the way you look, and bring that to your appointment," advises Bowe. (A picture of yourself in your 20s might be especially helpful, as your face was at its fullest then.) This gives you a more realistic point of reference and will also help him or her better understand how to enhance your natural features. Even if you're going in because there's just one pesky wrinkle bothering you, be open to suggestions. "We see your face in a three-dimensional way that's entirely different from how you see it," says Shamban. "As long as you're seeing someone who is properly trained, be willing to listen to their recommendations, even if they're not something you initially thought of."

4. The actual product.

There are many more cosmetic injectables available than you realize, and it's important to educate yourself on the various options out there. Take neurotoxin—despite the fact that Botox is a household name, it isn't the only botulinum toxin out there. "It's like calling any tissue a Kleenex, even if it's a completely different brand," says Bowe. Dysport and Xeomin are also botulinum toxin injections; while the brand names differ, it's the same type of toxin, and most dermatologists agree that the results are essentially the same. Still, it's worth asking which one your injector plans on using, as prices can vary.

There's even more variety when it comes to fillers. The largest category is those that are made of hyaluronic acid, a sugar that's naturally occurring in the body and can hold 1,000 times its weight in water. They include Restylane, Juvéderm, and Belotero Balance. Despite the fact that they're all made of the same thing, there are differences in how the hyaluronic acid particles are linked together, resulting in slightly different end looks. Even within each of these brands there are variants. For example, along with Restylane there's Restylane Silk and Restylane Lyft, both of which have slightly different-size particles and are better for filling different areas of the face. Juvéderm has various fillers as well. Point being: Ask your injector exactly what is inside the syringe and why it was chosen over another option. Don't be surprised if they mix and match, though: "We often layer and use different ones together to achieve the best result," Bowe explains.

5. What to do before and after the injection.

While injectables are minimally invasive and can be done in minutes, there are important things to keep in mind pre- and post-appointment. Botulinum toxin injections

are a true lunchtime procedure: There's nothing you need to do beforehand, and the only restrictions afterward are not exercising or putting your head down for about four hours. Try to avoid icing the injection site; while it used to be common practice, new research shows that it can slow the uptake of the toxin in the muscle. In other words, it won't work as well.

Fillers are a different story. Because bruising and swelling are the most common side effects, especially in sensitive areas like the lips, schedule appointments at least 48 hours before any major event. Bowe also suggests that you stop taking aspirin, Aleve, Advil, Motrin, and fish-oil supplements two weeks prior to getting a hyaluronic acid filler, since all are blood thinners that can increase the likelihood of bruising and swelling. And—file this under "strange but true"—never book your annual dental checkup right after getting a filler. "When your teeth are cleaned, a ton of bacteria is released into your mouth and travels into the bloodstream. Fillers are considered an implant, a foreign substance in the body, and this excess bacteria ups the risk of infection," says Shamban.

6. How long the results will last.

Multiple factors affect the longevity of the results: the product used, how much was injected, where it was put in the face. As a general guideline, botulinum toxin lasts around four to six months, while hyaluronic acid fillers last anywhere from six to 18 months. So if you like the results, be prepared to make this another part of your beauty routine that will require some upkeep. And if you *don't* like the results, keep in mind that hyaluronic acid fillers are reversible: An enzyme can be injected that will dissolve the filler within 24 hours. Toxin is not, however, so it's always better to ask for less and add more later. Bowe says it's common practice for injectors to have their first-time clients come back two weeks after their injection to reassess the results and touch up with more if needed (at no extra cost).

<http://www.allure.com/beauty-trends/health/2016/cosmetic-injectable-filler-procedure-guide>