

REAL SIMPLE

The Positive and Negative Long-Term Effects of Botox You Should Know

Wendy Rose Gould | June 21, 2023



PHOTO: YULIA REZNIKOV/GETTY IMAGES

The advent of Botox pretty much revolutionized the “anti-aging” industry. By simply enduring a handful of tiny pin pricks and handing over a wad of Benjamins, you can erase fine lines and deep wrinkles for a smooth, younger-than-your-actual-years visage.

For those unfamiliar, Botox is a type of injectable neuromodulator that temporarily weakens or paralyzes muscles. Similar to the way we refer to any tissue as a Kleenex, Botox has become a sort of catch-all phrase for neuromodulators. Other examples include Dysport, Xeomin, and Jeuveau, and they all work similarly.

“I generally tell my patients that they will begin to see some results within the first week but it takes two weeks to obtain full results,” notes Noreen Galaria, MD FAAD, a board-certified dermatologist and founder of Inner Glow Vitamins. “Within two weeks patients notice a relaxing of their fine lines and active wrinkles. They will also notice a smoother appearance to the skin with diminished pore size and sweating.”

We’re all familiar with the amazing short-term results, but have you ever been curious about the long-term effects of Botox and other neuromodulators? Ahead, we’re diving into both the positives and potential negatives.

Positive Long-Term Effects

Neuromodulators smooth out the look of existing wrinkles, but this injectable has some notable long-term benefits, as well.

Helps Prevent Future Wrinkles

Along with smoothing existing lines, Botox may help prevent the formation of new wrinkles. Long story short, there are two types of wrinkles: dynamic—which are visible only while making a facial expression—and static wrinkles, which are always there.

“Dynamic wrinkles, as a result of repetitive muscle contraction, become static wrinkles over time, especially after the skin starts losing its elasticity due to things like excess unprotected sun exposure,” explains Jeffrey G. Lind II, MD, a double board certified plastic surgeon. “If [you] start using Botox at a much earlier age, it will dramatically slow down the progression to static wrinkles in the treated area.”

Your Doses May Decrease

Another potential long-term benefit of Botox and other neuromodulators is that, with continued use, you may find you need fewer visits and smaller doses. Dr. Galaria says this occurs because the muscle has weakened and is less apt to wrinkle.

Can Minimize Headaches

For some, one of the tell-tale signs their Botox is wearing off is when they get headaches or notice more tension in their face. Because neuromodulators relax the muscles in your face, it can help ward off clenching, headaches, and even migraines.

“Botox has been approved for the treatment of chronic migraines and has been shown to reduce the frequency and severity of migraines in some individuals,” notes celebrity facial plastic surgeon **Kimberly Lee, MD**. With consistent ongoing usage, you may find relief from those painful headaches.

You May Look Younger Over Time

Generally speaking, consistent neuromodulator injections can help you look more youthful even as the clock continues ticking. “A great study was done several years ago on twins where one had regular Botox and the other didn’t,” says Dr. Galleria. “At the end of 13 years, the twin that was treated not only had less wrinkles at rest even when her Botox had worn off, but also had better skin quality and smoothness in the treated areas.”

Negative Long-Term Effects

Neuromodulators have been studied in depth for over 20 years and are considered safe for ongoing use. As such, negative long-term effects of Botox are far and few between, and short term negative effects are more likely. These short-term effects are either the result of poor injection skills, not following post-care advice, or in rare instances an allergic reaction. Because Botox and other neuromodulators are temporary—meaning they wear off within three to six months—these short-term effects will also go away.

All that said, it's important to note a few of the potential long-term effects that may not be viewed as a positive.

May Require Higher Dosing

One potential “long-term negative effect” of Botox is that over time you may find you need more frequent appointments or higher amounts of Botox to maintain your results, which can get expensive. (Some experience the opposite effect where they need less over time, as mentioned above. Every patient is different.)

“Very rarely, ‘tolerance’ to Botox can develop over longer-term use. That is, patients can become resistant to the effects of Botox,” says board-certified dermatologist Blair Murphy Rose, MD, FAAD. “This is thought to be caused by the development of neutralizing antibodies in the body. Antibodies can be thought of as molecules of the immune system that bind to and, in this case, deactivate another protein or stop it from functioning.”

Dr. Galaria adds that this could also be the result of simply aging and having more wrinkles to contend with over time. In other words: You’ve got way more wrinkles at age 40 or 50 than you would at age 20 or 30.

Weakened/Atrophied Muscles

On the opposite side of the coin, some people experience a notable muscle weakening when using Botox over time. This occurs because the muscle is being underused. For many practitioners and their patients, this is considered a positive since it means fewer wrinkles. However, Dr. Galaria says, “In some women this atrophy or weakening of the muscle might make the underlying veins in your face more visible.” She adds that this may be accompanied by unnatural motion limitations.

Subtle Flattening Effect

Another potential ‘side effect’ worth mentioning is that over time, as facial muscles change, “relaxing muscles further with Botox can actually lead to a subtle flattening effect of the brows,” Dr. Galara says. If you get Botox in other parts of the phase—like the masseters (cheek/jaws) for clenching, then you may notice a slimmer face or more angled appearance over time. This is considered a pro for some and a con for others.

The bottom line is that neuromodulators have been heavily researched and studied, are FDA-approved, and considered safe for use. Every person will have their own experience with this anti-aging injectable, and a customized approach and clear communication with your practitioner is a must.

<https://www.realsimple.com/long-term-effects-of-botox-7551038>