



# The beginner's guide to appearance medicine

As turning to the needle, filler or light ray becomes more mainstream for beauty treatments,

**Claudia Renford** talks to two experts about the latest developments and the options that are currently available.

**N**o longer a taboo subject, non-invasive cosmetic medicine (or appearance medicine) has seen a significant increase in the number of women (and men) turning to it for quick, effective skin rejuvenation solutions over the past five years.

Dubbed the 'lunchtime fix', the high-reward and low-risk options of Botox, injectables and now treatments using our own plasma are becoming more and more popular as we look beyond a power-packed serum or moisturiser and seek fast, simple solutions, with little recovery time, to improve our skin's luminosity, plumpness, lines and thickness. »

## Botox

The Botox boom is still going strong. It has been used medically for more than 30 years, and cosmetically for around 25 years, and has proven to be very effective in both areas. Botox is about prevention; it's designed to relax the muscles that cause fine lines and wrinkles.

"Our face is made up of over 50 different muscles that all integrate and form what we call facial expressions," explains Dr Catherine Stone from The Face Place Medspa.

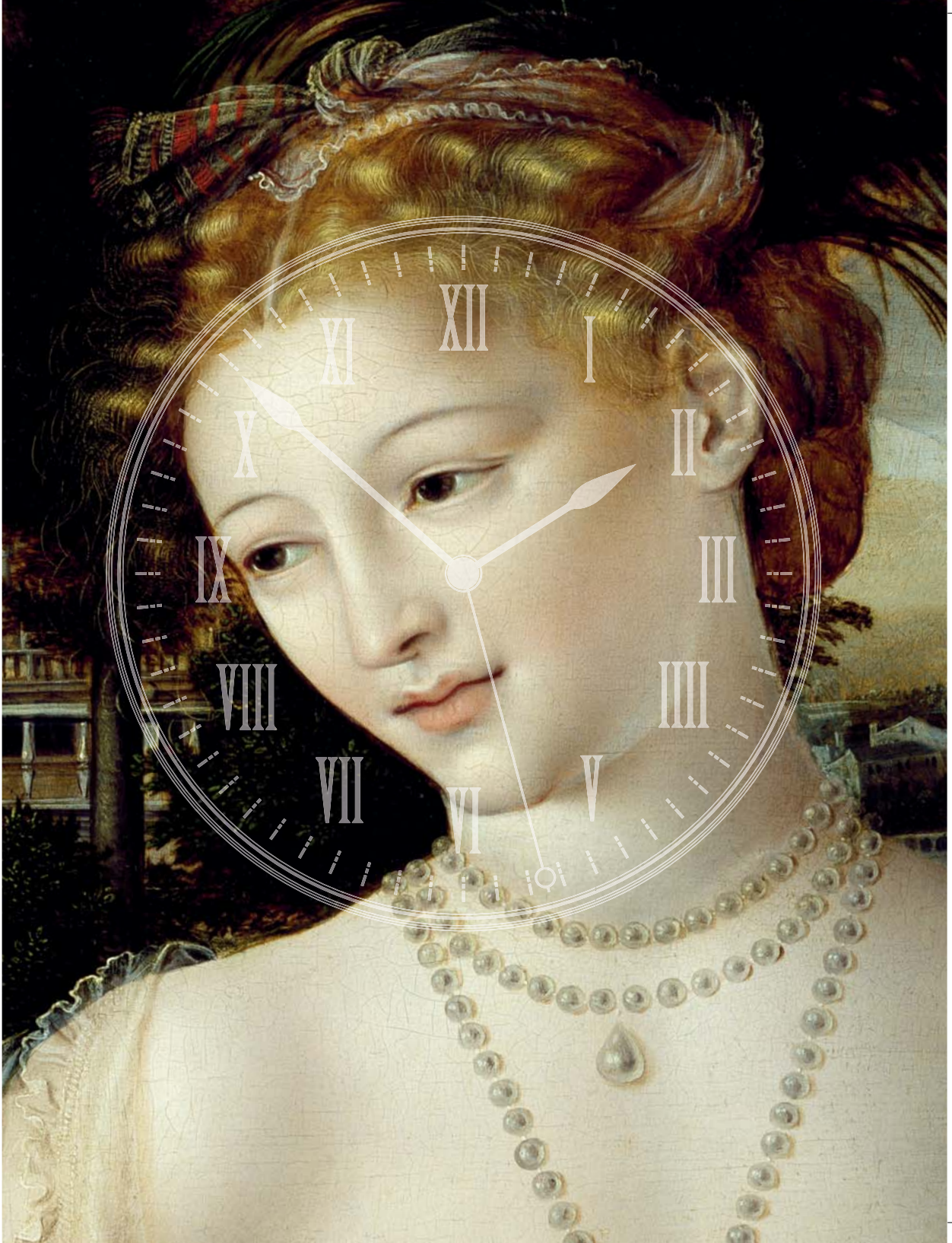
"Every time we frown or squint, we are effectively banging our skin together, which is breaking down collagen fibres (think of collagen as steel gutters that support our skin). When we are young, we have a lot of healthy, active skin cells that get in and repair themselves, but as we age we develop fewer skin cells, they get lazy and we are breaking down collagen faster than our skin cells can keep up

with. That's when you start to notice the fine lines creeping in."

By administering Botox - a protein - into the muscles, you are relaxing those muscles and reducing the number of messages sent from the nerve endings to the muscles that stimulate contractions and cause frown lines. "In effect," says Catherine, "you're not banging those fibres together any more."

Botox can be used to treat a lot of concerns, including the 'grumpy frown', crow's feet, horizontal frown lines and excessive sweating. Gone are the major concerns that once gave Botox a bad name - including the 'frozen face'. Subtle but significant is how Catherine would describe her treatments, as would many in this field, and it is what consumers want - particularly in New Zealand, where we look for a more natural, 'enhanced' version of ourselves.

As the heaviest buyers of cosmetics, women aged 18-34 are one of the biggest potential markets.





**Light treatments**

Light treatments (including Red and LED light) are good for improving texture and tone in the skin, and reducing age spots and pigmentation, spider veins, acne and rosacea.

While the thought of lying under a light for 20 or 30 minutes might seem risky, Dr Joanna Romanowska from Clinic 42 ensures us it is safe.

"Unlike a sunbed that uses damaging ultra-violet rays, this procedure uses infrared, which is not damaging - rather, it seems to draw healing cells to the area of concern and encourages the skin to make new collagen and new elastin," explains Joanna.

The process is pain-free - it might even feel as if it's not doing anything at all as you lie there with three panels that cover your face, but you should see dramatic results in the quality and texture of your skin after a course of about nine to 10 treatments.

**\$6 billion** was spent globally on Botox and fillers in 2014.

**Dermal needling/fillers**

Our skin is a wonderful barrier for keeping things out of our bodies, so if we want active ingredients to penetrate into our skin, that is when procedures such as dermal needling come into play. By 'puncturing' the skin with tiny needles, we are providing channels for the products to get into.

"Dermal needling uses a device that has about 20 tiny needles that vibrate and move over the area being treated. It punctures the skin and allows the product to get under the skin - it feels a bit like scratching," says Dr Joanna Romanowska, who gives her patients an anaesthetic to make the experience more comfortable. This type of procedure is very effective on PRP (Platelet-Rich Plasma) treatments (see opposite page).

Dermal fillers are skin fillers. "They are like plumping up your pillow," says Dr Catherine Stone, who has noticed a significant improvement in how they are administered. Previously, collagen dermal fillers were used, but the problem with them, she noticed, was they soon disappeared.

"Our bodies build up and break down collagen very quickly, so dermal

fillers disappeared just as quickly as they went in."

Today, Hyaluron-based fillers are commonly used. Hyaluronc acid is naturally found in our bodies; its job is to attract water and plump up the body, but we lose it as we get older.

"So our skin gets thinner and drier. If we put Hyaluronic acid back into our skin in its natural form, it would be gone within a week. Hyaluron-based fillers are stabilised, so they can last four to six months, some as long as 12 months."

Fillers can treat lines and wrinkles, but avoid the crow's feet, as the skin around that area is very fine and injections near there can sometimes be visible. Fillers can be used through the chin, neck and cheeks and are good for restoring what is lost from the face as we get older. "We go through 'bony' changes in our face as we age," says Catherine. "Our eye sockets become bigger, we flatten through the cheeks and cheekbones and we lose the support that is holding us up. I liken our face to a tent - once the tent pole collapses, the fabric has to go somewhere, and like our skin, it just goes down." And that is where dermal fillers come in to plump it back up.

**Global trends**

- Different countries have different beauty goals - New Zealand and Australia are aligned with Canada in preferring 'positive ageing' and a natural, refreshed look.

- Australian women spend more on cosmetic procedures per capita than American women.

- Wrinkle relaxers and fillers are growing by 10 per cent per year; body contouring by 12 per cent.

- One in four women has to date pursued a cosmetic medicine treatment of any kind.

- An additional two in four women may consider a treatment in the future.

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**PRP (Platelet-Rich Plasma)**

"What I like about PRP is that it is using your body's own messaging system to rejuvenate and improve skin texture," says Dr Catherine Stone.

Dr Joanna Romanowska agrees, seeing this innovative form of appearance medicine as a way forward for skin rejuvenation, although it was first used in cardiothoracic surgery more than 20 years ago.

PRP is where Botox was 14 years ago - it's at the tipping point and suddenly everyone is keen to use it.

"PRP treatment uses the healing parts of your own blood - your own platelets and plasma - to tell your body to rejuvenate whatever tissue you put it into," says Catherine. The PRP is isolated from a sample of blood (about 2 teaspoons) then spun around in a centrifuge and injected into a specific area.

It can be used for many different concerns, but cosmetically it is commonly used for improving skin

texture, thickness and luminosity, and is especially good for fine, crepey skin around the eyes, neck, chest and backs of hands. "It is one of the procedures we can use to reduce bagginess under the eye," adds Joanna. It can also be used to prevent hair loss and is excellent in helping to treat scars when combined with dermal needling.

The 'vampire' facial, made famous by Kim Kardashian in a rather disturbing social media image, isn't as bad as it looked. This facial uses a dermal needling device and mixes PRP with Hyaluronic acid to significantly improve skin's texture and luminosity.

Results may vary, Joanna explains. "The healthier the person, the better the results, but unlike Botox and dermal fillers (where we have control), plasma is a live tissue, so it's a variable, which means we have no control over it. We can't guarantee results and everybody responds differently."

**Top tips**

- Don't ditch your daily creams if having one of these procedures - significant improvement shows when you keep up your daily moisturising, particularly if your cream contains retinol and vitamins A and C.

- Be sun safe before and after treatments, particularly with light treatments where it is advised to stay out of the sun for a month before and after a procedure.

**1 in 4 women has to date pursued a cosmetic medicine treatment of some kind.**

With all procedures, there can be side effects, and precaution should be taken into consideration. The longer lead time you give your doctor, the better. If you are planning a procedure before going to a major event, it is advised that you consult your practitioner at least six to 12 months prior to the event.

The New Zealand Society of Cosmetic Medicine has some simple guidelines to help you before you proceed. You need to ask yourself:

- Am I confident in my doctor?
- Do I feel confident about having this procedure done?

- Am I happy with the arrangements that have been made for me to reach my desired result?
- Have I had all my questions answered?
- Do I understand any risks and potential complications with this procedure?

Remember, NZSCM (New Zealand Society of Cosmetic Medicine) physicians are bound to take into account the holistic nature of the client's needs, including physical, emotional, psychological and environmental.

