

LIVING

# Botox losing face amid celeb backlash

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From frozen foreheads to taut smiles, celebs such as Lindsay Lohan (clockwise from top left), Bruce Jenner, Meg Ryan, Lara Flynn Boyle, Renee Zellweger and Nicole Kidman are showing signs of Botox overuse.

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It may be freezing outside — but the faces of American women are thawing out.

Botox, the most common cosmetic surgery procedure in the country, is suffering a serious public backlash, a decade after its rise to rigid prominence on the brows of celebrities and average folk alike.

The waxy, immobile visages of middle-aged stars like Nicole Kidman, Bruce Jenner, Renée Zellweger — and even that of 27-year-old Lindsay Lohan — have become cautionary tales of overindulging with the injectable antiwrinkle treatment. And now many A-listers are speaking out about their revulsion for Botox.



“Middle Age Beauty” author Machel Shull advocates fighting wrinkles naturally, without Botox.

Photo: John Chapple

Earlier this year, Gwyneth Paltrow, 41, admitted she’d dabbled with the age-defying toxin. But, she said in an interview, “I won’t do Botox again, because I looked crazy. I looked like Joan Rivers!”

And 54-year-old Emma Thompson, on a tour for her new movie “Saving Mr. Banks,” made some pointed comments to UK talk show host Graham Norton recently: “Look at me, I’m normal. I really wouldn’t do anything. It’s psychotic to have your body opened up and stuff put in and inject yourself with poisons.” Even 46-year-old Kidman, the queen of Botox, disavowed the cosmetic procedure this year. “I did try Botox, unfortunately,” she told an Italian paper, “but I got out of it and now I can finally move my face again.”

Flashback to 2003: Botox, a botulinum toxin injection which had recently been approved by the FDA for freezing facial wrinkles, was all the rage — it had, in fact, just become the most requested cosmetic procedure in the United States. Everyone from A-listers to glamorous housewives was lining up to try the magic elixir.

But it seems the Botox tide may finally be turning.

A slew of books and online confessionals (“Beyond Botox”; “Botox or Bangs”;

thefrisky.com's "11 Reasons I'll Never Get Botox Again"; Redbook's "Botched Botox Horror Stories") are touting the advantages of faces maintained naturally instead of via injections, and chronicling the serious downside of shooting up your mug with the toxin.



Gwyneth Paltrow, 41, regrets trying Botox, which she says made her face look "like Joan Rivers."

Photo: Mike Marsland/WireImage



"[Botox] should be banned for actors, as steroids are for sportsmen. Acting is about expression." –Rachel Weisz, 43

Photo: Ian Gavan/Getty Images



"I really understand the chagrin that accompanies aging, especially for a woman, but I think people look funny when they freeze their faces." –Meryl Streep, 64

Photo: Munawar Hosain/Startraksphoto.com



"The thought of a needle coming to my forehead, it really gives me the heebie-jeebies." –Salma Hayek, 47

Photo: Jason Merritt/Getty Images





"I had something sucked outta [my neck] about 10 years ago, but I just am kinda scared of the injections [like Botox]. I'm afraid I need my face to move when I work." –Susan Sarandon, 67

Photo: Stefanie Keenan/Getty Images

The latest, "Middle Age Beauty: Soulful Secrets From a Former Face Model Living Botox Free in Her Forties," was penned by Machel Shull, a former model who espouses a botulism-free lifestyle.

Botox, she says, is for suckers. "Before Botox, ask yourself these questions," she writes. "What other methods can I use before filling my only face with a poison?... Remember there is only one you in this world. Embrace your natural beauty. Find other ways to keep wrinkles away that don't require injecting a needle into your face."

Her book is packed with noninvasive beauty tips — practice meditation, slather crow's feet with Vaseline, limit drinking — and comes 10 years after the meteoric rise of Botox as a widely accepted method of combating the creases of age.

"I know people in their 20s who are thinking about Botox," says Shull, 42, who lives in Southern California. "There are some girls doing it who don't even have wrinkles yet. And these companies are just trying to sell products!"

Perhaps those 20-somethings should listen carefully to what A-listers who make their living off their faces are now saying about the drug.

Julia Roberts, 46, has dissed Botox, saying, "I want my kids to know when I'm happy and when I'm confounded."

Rachel Weisz has gone so far as to propose that the treatment be outlawed from her

profession: “It should be banned for actors, as steroids are for sportsmen. Acting is all about expression — why would you want to iron out a frown?” Kate Winslet echoed her sentiment, saying, “I am an actress; I don’t want to freeze the expression of my face.”

Salma Hayek has admitted to being grossed out by the very thought of the injections: “I have no Botox. The thought of a needle coming to my forehead, it really gives me the heebie-jeebies.”

And Isabella Rossellini has compared Botox to the painful practice of foot-binding. WebMD lists possible, immediate side effects of facial-injected Botox as “dizziness, mild difficulty swallowing, respiratory infections such as cold or flu, pain, nausea, headache, muscle weakness, double vision, drooping or swollen eyelid, eye irritation, dry eyes, tearing, reduced blinking and increased sensitivity to light.”

Compared to a few facial lines, Shull asks, is it really worth it? Plus, she says, the effects of regular Botox injections look bizarre — and don’t bode well for long-term beauty.

“Some of those chicks on the reality shows, they’re going in every month. Those people are starting to look like aliens,” she says. “And they find that eventually the face muscles will atrophy. It freezes the muscles, and eventually, if you overdo it, the muscle will fall forward in the face. It will sag.”

For the past decade, we’ve all witnessed the strange, inhuman toll Botox can take: Kidman, Lohan and 52-year-old Meg Ryan are frequently cited as overzealous Botoxers, and it’s hardly surprising to see stretched, shiny faces incapable of human emotion shuffling down red carpets.

At the Oscars earlier this year, many viewers were shocked when 44-year-old Zellweger seemed unable to move her face. A typical tweet from that night: “Who hit Renée Zellweger in the face with a shovel of Botox?”

Oscars staple Joan Rivers, 80, a proud Botox overuser, has said even she’s taking a break from the stuff, telling the “Today” show: “Betty White’s bowels move more than my face. I couldn’t blow out the candles on my birthday cake.”

And yet sales are hardly flagging: Botox’s parent company, Allergan, is expected to earn nearly \$2 billion in profits from the drug in 2013 alone. (It’s also prescribed as a cure for conditions other than wrinkles, including migraines, excessive sweating and bladder control.)

But it does appear that Botox’s moment in the sun as wrinkle-eraser-to-the-stars may be

waning. As Roberts put it: “Your face tells a story, and it shouldn’t be a story about your drive to the doctor’s office.”

## **Botox, Then and Now**

- Botox is a purified form of a deadly toxin called botulinum.
- It was approved by the FDA in April 2002 to treat facial wrinkles. Average national cost for a single treatment is \$328 according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.
- The effect of the treatment wears off in three to six months.
- In 2003 Botox profits totaled \$564 million. That year the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery called it America’s fastest-growing cosmetic procedure.
- In 2003 and 2004, the FDA sent Botox company Allergan warnings about minimizing side effects of the treatment.
- A 2004 lawsuit against a Newport Beach, Calif., dermatologist alleged that “Mr. Botox” was paid hundreds of thousands of dollars by Allergan to promote the drug.
- Botox was injected 5.6 million times in 2011.
- 2013 sales for Botox are projected to be between \$1.94 billion and \$2 billion. Sales for the first half of this year were up from last year.

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