

# ***Botox for wrinkles? Botox for Headaches? Is this the right solution for you?***

## **FOR YOUR HEALTH**



by  
JEFFREY S. HADDAD, D.D.S.

Basically, the botulinum toxins block the nerve signals that instruct your muscles to contract. So why would anyone want to purposely inject such a dangerous substance into their body? The answer is simple: if a muscle is paralyzed, it cannot move; if it cannot move, it cannot wrinkle. Thus, Botox works by freezing the muscles that cause wrinkles. In addition to cosmetic reasons, Botox has also been sought out to treat chronic migraines and even TMJ symptoms. There are advantages and disadvantages to all treatments, and Botox definitely has its pros and cons, but is it the right solution for you?

Botox has been used for years, however, it has only been FDA approved since 2002 for cosmetic purposes. In 2010, it was approved for chronic migraines for only patients that have 15 or more days per month with headaches lasting four hours a day or longer and only for people 65 years old or younger. It is not approved for treating TMJ symptoms like headaches, jaw pain, neck pain, or ringing in the ears and is considered experimental at this point. And although giving some relief to people, Botox is only masking these symptoms and never addressing the root cause. Do you want to inject an unnecessarily dangerous medication in your body if you don't have to?

### **So why turn to Botox?**

**Cosmetics:** For cosmetic purposes, Botox can treat wrinkles and lines around your eyes, on your forehead and on the rest of your face...this is an elective choice. Botox blocks signals from the nerves to the muscles. When a muscle gets injected, it no longer

contracts. This causes the wrinkles to relax and soften. However, this effect on the muscles is temporary. Botox will wear off in approximately 3-6 months which means repeatedly returning for these injections and continued cost. Is there a more permanent solution? What most people don't realize is how much your teeth support the surrounding facial and neck muscles. As we get older, and our teeth get worn down, the area between the nose and the chin starts to shorten in length increasing the wrinkles and creases in the face. The exaggerated version of this is when an older person loses their teeth and takes out their denture and their nose almost touches their chin! They have lost the height and support of their teeth which results in a collapsed bite, loss of facial soft tissue support, and show the cruelty of the aging process. What is really amazing is when we rebuild these worn down teeth and restore that facial support. The result is a person that can look 10 years younger, and more importantly, is restored to a higher level of health permanently. So instead of the illusion of a younger face and smoother skin, we are restoring a person's facial support, and actually giving them a "non-surgical facelift."

**Headaches and TMJ:** 90% of all TMJ symptoms are muscular in nature, therefore, many people have turned to Botox as a potential treatment for TMJ disorders. Botox has become a popular treatment for acute relief in TMJ patients, but unfortunately masks the root cause of TMJ pain and other symptoms. Presently, Botox is not approved by the FDA for use in treating TMJ disorders, however, because it stops muscle contraction, it can relieve muscular tension and pain in the facial muscles. This could be beneficial for clenchers in an acute muscular pain situation.

Botox shuts down the facial muscle fibers injected for 3-4 months, but in the meantime, new muscle fibers can grow in an attempt to carry on the task of chewing, movement, and facial

expression. Now when the Botox wears off, there could be an imbalance of muscle mass and an asymmetrical response to the task they were intended for. In addition, further deterioration of the TMJs will continue despite the patient feeling "comfortable." An analogy I like to use with my patients is to that of broken leg. If you broke your leg, and was on morphine, you would perceive no pain at all...but your leg is still broken. Further damage will occur to the bone, ligaments, and muscles of the leg even though you have no pain. Not only will this injury continue to heal improperly or not heal at all, but you could end up in a worse situation due to not addressing the root cause in the first place.

As a neuromuscular dentist, I would rather retrain muscles than shut them off, and support the misaligned jaw in a comfortable, unstrained, and pain-free posture with a properly made orthotic appliance. We successfully treat migraines, tension headaches, and jaw pain without medications, surgery, or injections or masking of symptoms and offer people a permanent solution to address proper support of the face and neck. This approach can be the answer to people who have given up hope or have been told that they have to live and suffer with these daily symptoms that are hindering their daily lives.

**Jeffrey S. Haddad D.D.S. received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of Michigan in 1997. He completed his dental education at the University of Michigan in 2001. Dr. Haddad is a fellow of the Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies. Dr. Haddad lectures nationally on cosmetic dentistry, TMJ and sleep disorders, and teaches other dentists the latest techniques in TMJ and Sleep.**

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