ABC7 Chicago

**Removing wrinkles and frown lines without chemicals or surgery**

By Sylvia Perez

September 27, 2007 - Doctors say it's an intriguing approach that's starting to raise eyebrows.

Botox is popular, but it's a temporary fix and expensive. So there's a growing demand for more, minimally invasive options. The newest is an experimental treatment that aims for facial nerves, instead of muscle. It may not only last longer but provide a more natural look.

Debbie Soldan is in charge of safety for a Chicago construction company. She says her skin suffers because she spends a lot of time out in the elements, and she's always dishing out stern looks.

She's hoping a machine will help soften up her furrowed brow. It's called GFX.

"It is knocking out a nerve that is transmitting to the muscle, so therefore, the muscle will no longer contract and frown," said plastic surgeon Dr. Steven Bloch.

Bloch is now testing the device to see how long the effects last. The patient is first numbed. Then a thin probe is inserted under the skin. The doctor then searches for the problem nerve that's causing the wrinkling of the brow. Then the RF energy is delivered, zapping the nerve in the forehead with heat.

"So we are trying to be extremely selective as to what we are knocking out and what we are maintaining," Bloch said.

Bloch said that along with softening lines, it gives eyebrows a lift while persevering other nerves so the forehead is not completely stiff, giving a more natural look.

The results may last anywhere from 8 to 18 months. That's compared to three to four months for Botox. While it temporarily freezes muscle, GFX zaps or knocks out the nerve, preventing it from responding anymore. The result should be less movement and fewer wrinkles.
GFX is not to be confused with other radio frequency treatments such as thermage, which involves tightening the skin by heating it up and stimulating new collagen.

Dermatologist Ella Toombs thinks GFX is promising but wants more research.

"So what are the long term effects of essentially ablating a nerve? There has to be long term studies that address that question," said Toombs.

Toombs practices in Washington D.C. and at Rush University Medical Center. She was part of the FDA committee that approved Botox as a wrinkle treatment. She said no matter what you choose, you have to have realistic expectations.

"Don't think you are going to turn a 50-year-old face into a 20-year-old face. Realize what it is going to cost and decide whether or not if it is worth it for you to take the risk associated with it," she said.

Debbie was specifically looking for something that lasted longer than Botox. So she was willing to take a chance with this experimental treatment.

"I don't have the big lines there anymore. My eyebrows are a little higher. It feels a lot different. I look different. I look better than I did," she said.

GFX is not yet available. It's expected to cost around two to three thousand dollars per treatment. Researchers are also looking at the possibility that this can be used to treat other problem areas, such as crow's feet or sagging skin under the chin.

The World's Richest People
How The Rich Stay Healthy
Liz Moyer, 10.03.07, 12:00 PM ET

Botox. Blood filtering. Personal physicians on call. When you're rich, there's no end to what you can buy to look younger and live longer.

If the rich have anything in common with normal people, it's that health is a primary concern. And from the looks of a survey by Prince & Associates, a Connecticut firm that tracks the habits and morays of the rich, their health concerns seem to match those of the general population. The biggest worry cited by those with over $1 million in
assets: accidents, followed by cancer and heart disease.

But priorities differ between the "super rich" ($10 million or more in net worth) and the merely rich ($1 million to $10 million). Super rich people care more, across the board.

**In Pictures: How The Rich Stay Healthy**

Wealthier people, for example, are nearly twice as likely to fret about mental health. Maybe they've been watching too many old movies with batty old matrons. They're also more worried about heart disease, cancer, viral and bacterial illness and accidents.

Russ Alan Prince surveyed 431 individuals with net worths of at least $1 million; about a third of those with assets over $10 million. Of the total sample, 36% said accidents were their main concern, followed by cancer (27%), and heart disease (21%).

Prince says it's true that money means longevity. The rich can afford good insurance, preventative care and exotic treatments, after all.

How exotic? How about filtering the blood to rid the body of toxins (the stuff of rock star legends)? The procedure is similar to blood dialysis, in which the blood passes through a filter that removes toxins. The cost of a typical first dialysis treatment is at least $2,000. (Note: The federal government picks up 80% of the tab for people who need dialysis for medical reasons.) There's no saying how much a Swiss clinic for super rich celebrities might charge for such a procedure.

Plastic surgery and other cosmetic treatments are much more common. Almost half the people in the Prince & Associates survey said they'd had plastic surgery in the last two years. Again, the percentages skew higher for the super rich. Of those with more than $10 million in assets, 58% have had plastic surgery, and 81% say they will have it in the next two years.

In contrast, 42% of those with between $1 million and $10 million have had surgery, and 54% say they plan to have it in the next two years.

Lasers and injectible cosmetic treatments like Botox, Restalin and Juvaderm are increasingly popular alternatives to going under the knife, says Ken Beer, a Florida dermatologist to the rich, but these are still out of reach financially for most people.

New laser treatments, for example, using state of the art equipment to resurface facial and other skin, costs between $3,000 and $6,000 for a series of sessions. The injectibles Botox and Restalin can cost $700 a needle, and most patients need several needles in one visit for their treatments. Injectibles patients also require twice-yearly touch-ups.

Another popular treatment is earlobe restructuring--those diamonds can get heavy, pulling your lobes out of shape. This treatment, also using injectibles, runs about $700 to $1500.
The traditional facelift costs about $6,000, depending on the extent of the "renovation," Beer says. And once healed from the surgery, many patients are referred for injectible treatments as "maintenance."

It's no wonder Beer and his peers are flocking to conventions to learn about the latest treatments--he's got people jetting into Palm Beach from all over the country to get stuck with needles. The treatments "are so good," he says, "if you have the access and the money, the results are amazing."

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Why wrinkles form

1. **Decreased volume**

Over time, skin loses fat and produces less hyaluronic acid, a substance that retains moisture. As a result, mature skin is thinner and drier than young skin.

"Like a helium balloon the day after a party," says Beverly Hills dermatologist Mark Rubin, "when skin is not filled to the same degree, you'll see crinkling on the surface."

**Minimize the effects**
Apply moisturizer to temporarily rehydrate (and plump up) the skin. For more help, try filler injections.

2. Loss of elasticity

As skin ages, the collagen and elastin fibers in the dermis break down, reducing skin's ability to "snap back" from smiles and other facial expressions. Exposure to sunlight accelerates this process, especially UVA rays, which penetrate deeper into the skin than UVB rays.

Minimize the effects

Wear broad-spectrum sunblock (look for such ingredients as Mexoryl, Helioplex and avobenzone), and apply an antioxidant cream daily. To build collagen, try products with vitamin A, peptides or growth hormones.

3. Repetitive motion

Dynamic movements that cause the skin to repeatedly crease in the same place, such as smiling, will wear down the underlying tissue in that specific spot, creating a line that remains after muscles relax.

Minimize the effects

Smiling is essential, but you can limit other motions that deepen crow's-feet. For example, wear sunglasses to keep from squinting in bright light. For the most dramatic results, consider Botox.

Expert help for smile lines

For fast results, consider in-office procedures for trouble spots.

1. Injectable fillers

Collagen and hyaluronic acid fillers (like Restylane) can be injected directly into wrinkles to restore volume loss. Collagen is thin and more viscous, making it easier to apply under thin eye skin. By contrast, hyaluronic acid, which is denser and lasts longer, is better suited for filling the nasolabial area (the lines from mouth to nose).

Primary area of use: Crow's feet and nasolabial folds

Costs: Collagen: $250--$550 per area; hyaluronic acid: $300--$850 per area

Lasts: Collagen: 3--4 months; hyaluronic acid: 6--12 months

Downtime: Swelling can last 1--2 days; some slight redness.

Risks: Bumpiness and bruising

Our experience: These deep injections hurt, but our tester saw immediate improvement in nasolabial folds. She had no swelling.
Insider tip: If you get a bump, massage the area within 24 hours to smooth it out.

2. Botox

Botulinum toxin, aka Botox, "relaxes the muscles, so when you smile, the skin won't crinkle up in the area around your eyes," says Michigan dermatologist D'Anne Kleinsmith. Limiting repetitive movements prevents the formation of wrinkles in those areas and lessens the appearance of existing lines.

**Primary area of use:** Forehead, brow lines and crow's-feet COST $200--$500 per area

**Lasts:** Approximately 3--4 months

**Downtime:** Virtually none, but slight swelling (that looks like a welt) may last a few hours following the injection.

**Risks:** Drooping of the eyelid or brow (rare)

**Our experience:** Slightly painful. It takes three to four days for dynamic wrinkles (that appear when you make facial expressions) to disappear.

Insider tip: Avoid blood thinners such as ibuprofen or aspirin before treatment; they increase the risk of bruising.

At-home treatments

Use topical products to look better today -- and tomorrow.

**Instant fix**

"Anything you can do to hydrate your skin softens the appearance of fine lines," says dermatologist Susan Weinkle of Bradenton, Florida. For spot treatment of wrinkles, a product with a thick, cushiony feel fills in cracks better than a thinner cream or serum.


**Long-term help**

Nothing will turn back the clock or erase damage caused by sunbathing, but you can stimulate the production of new collagen to bolster the skin's thickness and firmness. Look for products with retinol (like Clinique) or peptides (like Olay).