

Migraines, MS symptoms and baldness – the other uses for Botox



ELAINE RANSOME, 27
Migraines

ELAINE, an accountant from Bedale, north Yorks, says Botox put an end to a year of debilitating migraines. It is not clear how Botox helps to stop these severe and long-lasting headaches but it may block transmission of pain signals to the brain. She says:

“On February 10 last year I woke up with a terrible migraine. After that I had one all day, every day, seven days a week. The pain was so unbearable I barely got out of bed.”

I went to the doctor for tests and in May I saw a specialist. I cut out all the things thought to cause migraines and was given lots of different drugs. I tried acupuncture and massage but nothing worked. I managed to work until June but then I had to stop.

I couldn't go out with friends, see my family or even leave the house.

By December, I felt I had exhausted every option so I spoke to the specialist again. Then Botox was suggested.

It is not available on the NHS but I managed to get treatment through the Migraine Trust. So in March I had 32 injections in my head and shoulders. A week later I really started to notice a difference. The effects are said to last a few months so I only have a bit of time left before the migraines start again.

But Botox has let me get back to a kind of normality.

● For more info, see migrainetrust.org

COSMETIC TREATMENT IS A MEDICAL MIRACLE

BOTOX was once the preserve of the rich and famous – but only half of the treatments carried out every year are done to combat wrinkles.

Botox injections are now being used to treat a long list of medical problems including migraine, teeth-grinding and excessive sweating.

The face-freezing jabs can even help to treat the more serious symptoms of multiple sclerosis and cerebral palsy.

It is even being used as a cure for baldness. If injected into the scalp, doctors in the US have found it can stimulate hair growth. In fact, only half of Botox's £855million-a-year sales are for cosmetic purposes.

Here, we take a look at the surprising medical uses of Hollywood's favourite beauty treatment.

CERY'S MAUNSELL-STEWART, SIX – Cerebral Palsy

CERY'S has Botox injections in her legs and arm to ease the symptoms of cerebral palsy, a brain condition that affects speech, movement, posture and co-ordination. She lives with mum Marie, dad Gwyn and brother Braydon, four weeks, in Coventry. Marie says:

“Cerys was born more than ten weeks premature and suffered bleeding to her brain, which caused damage. From birth we knew it was likely she would have cerebral palsy.”

For sufferers the spasticity means the muscles aren't relaxed so they contract and shorten

but the bones continue to grow. Botox allows the muscles to relax and, with physio and occupational therapy, Cerys is helped to use her muscles correctly.

When she was little her left hand was like a fist but the injections have helped her to open it up. She does not have the fine motor skills she should but she can pick up small things.

Her walking has improved too. If she hadn't had the treatment, I think she would be in a wheelchair most of the time. I was prepared to do pretty much anything to make life easier for her and this has really worked.”



TV DOC DAWN BACKS HOME TEST CANCER KIT

TELEVISION doctor Dawn Harper is hailing home-testing kits in the fight against cervical cancer.

Each day in the UK eight women are diagnosed with the deadly disease and three of those women will die.

But according to Dr Harper, co-presenter of Channel 4's *Embarrassing Bodies*, cervical cancer should be completely preventable in 2011 thanks to early detection methods such as regular cervical screening and HPV testing kits.

She says: “It's a tragedy when you meet young women who have ignored smear recall letters.”

Her comments come on the back of *Kiss Of Life*, launched by The Eve Appeal, a Sun-backed campaign to raise awareness of the five

By HELEN GILBERT

gynaecological cancers – cervical, ovarian, womb, vulvar and vaginal – and on the day a new HPV home testing kit is launched.

The Tampap Test can alert women to the early warning sign – almost 99.7 per cent of cervical cancers are caused by high strains of a common infection called Human Papillomavirus (HPV), which is passed on through sexual contact. Early detection of the virus is crucial.

Dr Harper explains: “For most people, their immune system will clear the virus naturally but, for some, the body doesn't clear the virus and over a period causes changes to cells in the cervix. These changes might, in some

women, become cancerous.”

The latest home-testing kit gives women a chance to stay on top of their health by inserting a tampon for five minutes, which collects a sample of cells.

Weapon

The tampon is then removed and popped into a test tube before being posted back to a lab which screens the sample for potentially high-risk strains of HPV. Results are returned within ten to 14 working days.

Dr Harper says: “A home-testing kit is another weapon in the armoury against cervical cancer. Anything that helps us identify women at risk and treat changes early before they become

cancerous has got to be a good thing.”

However, the TV doc is quick to point out the kits should be used IN ADDITION to smear tests and NOT as an alternative.

She adds: “Smear tests save lives. They look for pre-cancerous changes which left unchecked might, over a period of years, become cancerous. The kits go hand in hand with them.”

The Tampap Test costs £39.95 (plus £9.95 postage, packing and handling) and is available from tampap.com.

● For more information on the Kiss of Life Campaign, see eveappeal.org.uk.



...ask Dr Keith

your letters

SORCHA ANTONIA, 36 – Sweating

SORCHA, a medical receptionist from Eastcote, west London, claims Botox cured her excessive sweating, caused by a hormonal imbalance. She says:

When I was 16 I started sweating terribly. I could only wear black because I needed to hide the sweat patches.

My confidence hit rock-bottom. I was so self-conscious that I would sweat even more.

By my early 20s I tried everything from acupuncture to aromatherapy and every deodorant on the market. Nothing worked. My GP prescribed a stronger antiperspirant but it burnt the skin and didn't help the sweating.

A specialist diagnosed hyperhidrosis – or excessive sweating. He said there was little I could do apart from wash regularly. I felt

like I would never get better. With dry-cleaning bills, alternative cures and deodorants, I was spending thousands of pounds but getting nowhere.

Then in 2004 a new medical salon offered Botox injections to help. I was assessed to see where I sweated most, then had about 20 injections under each arm. In three days my sweating stopped.

It's the same principle as when Botox is used in the face. It paralyses the sweat glands so you can't sweat.

I have to have more injections every nine to 12 months.

It costs me £500 a time as only some primary care trusts fund it. But that's nothing compared to the amount that I was spending before.



LIZ PEACE, 37 – Multiple Sclerosis

LIZ, from Leicester, has used Botox to help with symptoms of multiple sclerosis, a disease in which nerves become destroyed, damaging a person's speech, sight and ability to move. She says:

When I was first diagnosed with MS back in 1990, one of the biggest problems I had to deal with was incontinence.

It was awful and I couldn't go out because I always needed to be near a loo. I had to be careful what I drank because my bladder was so sensitive. I had no control at all. When you have MS, your spinal cord is affected so it doesn't always send the right messages to the bladder and the muscles don't relax and contract as they should. The bladder becomes overstretched.

I first had Botox about three years ago at Leicester General Hospital. I started off having about 20 injections but now, because my bladder is so overstretched, I have about 30.

The Botox relaxes the detrusor muscle, which contracts to release urine, and increases storage capacity of the bladder. The results are out of this world – Botox really has changed my life.

I spent nearly 20 years with serious bladder problems and I was heading for major surgery. But this treatment has given me a new lease of life.

I can go out as much as I like and plan an evening or afternoon of what I want to do. I'm not scared to have a drink of water. I'm happier and healthier because Botox has allowed me to have my life back.



OTHER SURPRISING USES OF BOTOX

BLUSHING: The toxin in Botox interferes with signals between the nerve cells and can stop you going red-faced.

Swedish doctors carried out a study on 800 patients and 85 per cent were happy with the results.

TEETH-GRINDING: As many as one in four of us grind and clench our teeth when we're asleep, a condition known as bruxism.

Traditional treatments include stress management and a mouth guard but now Botox injections are being used to keep it under control.

They block the release of chemicals at the junction between the nerve and muscle so the message for the muscle to work fails to get through and it relaxes.

The treatment is currently not available

on the NHS and can cost £200 a time but results last up to four months.

BALDNESS: Botox can treat alopecia areata, a condition where cells around the hair follicles release chemicals that reject the hair and then stop it from growing.

Despite this, the hair follicles remain alive and can resume normal hair production if they receive the appropriate signal.

Botox interferes with the obstructive chemicals, allowing hair to grow again.

The technique is being developed by Dr Simon Ourian, a Hollywood cosmetic surgeon who gave his mother Botox to treat her headaches.

He then noticed her hair started to grow back where it had been thinning.

I SUFFER burning legs and feet – in bed they get so hot I have to get out for a walk about. Can you advise?

D WESTON, Address supplied

It's worth a trip to your doc to get this checked out.

Occasionally, it can be a sign of internal trouble – such as vitamin deficiencies, diabetes and kidney or thyroid problems.

These can be spotted with a simple blood test.

Another possibility is that your symptoms are the side effects of medication.

Certain blood pressure or angina pills – known as "calcium blockers" – can cause hot, red legs, sometimes with swollen ankles.

Stopping them, or switching to an alternative, may solve your problem. Your GP will advise.

Quite often, though, no particular cause is found.

In which case, your symptoms will be labelled, "burning feet syndrome".

This can usually be helped by avoiding getting your feet too hot – a cooling shower before bed may help.

And there's a variety of prescribed pills that can be tried, too. It's trial and error to find one that suits you.

I'VE had three nose bleeds in the last month.

I've had a headache and some pain in my neck, too. I wondered if I needed a neck X-ray or a brain scan. What do you think?

ROSE, Bushey, Herts

Nose bleeds are common



and almost never anything to worry about. It's usual for people to get a run of nose bleeds over a few weeks or so – they heal with a small clot which, if dislodged, starts up the bleed again.

If it keeps happening, some antibiotic cream applied inside the affected nostril may help it heal once and for all. Failing that, the leaky blood vessel in your nose can be sealed with a very minor procedure. Your GP may be able to do this for you.

I doubt your headache and neck pains are linked – unless they're caused by you getting a bit stressed by your nose bleeds. I certainly wouldn't recommend X-rays or scans.

MY knee clicks when I run. My hips, toes and fingers also click. Should I be concerned?

ANNIE, by email

Not at all. Many people notice "clicky joints".

The noises are made by the tendons around the joints and are harmless. They're not a sign of arthritis or anything else you need to worry about.

Chronic pains? Here's some useful know ow!

HURTING? Maybe not for much longer – because boffins in Cambridge have located the "chronic pain" gene.

Which is good news, especially if you're a mouse – because that's what they used in the research. Though it might also open the cage door to future treatments for us humans.

But what is chronic pain, exactly? No, it's not necessarily pain that's severe. It's pain that's gone on for a long time – at least six months, if you want to get technical.

Which means chronic pain tends to be a slow burner rather than a jab with a red-hot poker.

And there's a lot of it about. Experts reckon around 30 per cent of the population suffer from chronic pain.

So what are the common causes? And what – apart from popping painkillers – can you do about it?

BACK PAIN: Most dodgy backs improve in days or weeks. But a few become chronic.

The trick is to stay positive. Don't let your bad back grind you down. If possible, keep working, stick with your hobbies and take regular exercise.

Be back aware, sure, but don't brood over your pain. Heat and cold, massage, physiotherapy, manipulation and, maybe, acupuncture, can all help. So, too, does shedding some weight if you're tubby.

HEADACHES: Most persistent headaches aren't caused by tumours or blood pressure – though that's what the average headache sufferer

frets about – and that makes matters worse because these headaches typically result from stress or tension.

So the first step is to stop worrying and try de-stressing. Surprisingly, regular painkillers – especially those containing codeine – can aggravate headaches. Avoiding a painkiller habit might even solve the problem.

KNEE AND HIP ARTHRITIS: Your shock absorbers are wearing out. It's time to be kinder to your joints – slim down and put spongy insoles into your shoes. Stay fit, but avoid jarring those joints – swimming is ideal.

Specific exercises can help keep your joints strong and stable. Ask your GP or a physiotherapist.

And if you're in real trouble, you might need to see a surgeon for a new hip or knee.

PERIOD PAIN: Not chronic, strictly speaking, as it comes and goes. Still, a right pain in the pelvis.

If you're not keen on necking painkillers for your monthlies, self-help measures include heat, massage and a TENS (transcutaneous nerve stimulator) machine.

Stopping the fags and upping your exercise levels may help, too.

FIBROMYALGIA: This causes persistent muscle aches and is very difficult to treat. It's tricky to diagnose, too, as it mimics many other conditions.

Just having the label fibromyalgia helps some – it's frustrating having symptoms but no diagnosis.

Increasing fitness levels, warm-pool therapy and talking treatments may ease the symptoms.

NECK PAIN: This usually results from wear and tear, or inflamed muscles. Use heat and stretching exercises. A firm pillow and altering your computer screen height or angle may help, too.

So there are plenty of non-drug ways to soothe your chronic pain.

Not that you should be afraid of popping pills when necessary. Painkillers can be an effective way of treating, say, arthritis – even in the long term.

And certain pains – like the "nerve pain" suffered by some diabetics – really do need prescribed treatments.

Antidepressants can help, too, if the pain is dragging you down. And pain clinics are available in most areas if you need to see a specialist.

Hopefully, now, you'll be so pain-free we won't hear a squeak out of you. Unless you really are a mouse, that is.



WRITE TO: Dear Doc, The Sun, 3 Thomas More Square, London E98 1SN, or drkeith@the-sun.co.uk.

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