

BEAUTY EXPLORER

WE TRIED IT!

Wrinkle in Time

AN INTREPID EDITOR TURNS BACK THE CLOCK WITH BOTOX AND PERLANE. *By Jessica Bizik*

➔ “TELL ME WHAT YOU DON’T LIKE ABOUT YOURSELF.” Secretly, I’m hoping plastic surgeon Dr. Michele Shermak utters the famous line that started off every episode of the cult-hit TV show “Nip/Tuck.” (Turns out, she was a fan, too.) But on my virgin visit to her Towson practice, she goes softer: “What would you like to discuss today?”

I explain that I’m here for Botox—“Something everyone I ask says I don’t need,” I tell her, giving my barely creased forehead a Vanna White finger-swipe. “But I need a great story for the mag.” Also I confess: When I catch my face at rest in the reflection of my computer screen lately, “I look tired and sad—like the world’s bringing me down.” (Cue: “Gravity” by John Mayer.)

During the next hour, I develop girl-crush levels of admiration for Shermak, a brainy beauty who explains that time (loss of collagen, elasticity, etc.) and a recent weight loss may account for my newly deflated face. We opt to double down with two different injectables to perk me back up.

BODACIOUS BOTOX: No worse than getting a Novocain shot, the Botox app takes just minutes as Shermak deftly injects the liquid in tiny dots across my forehead and beside my eyes. The results take about ten days to fully kick in—and they are amazing. My forehead is as smooth as a baby’s bottom and my crow’s feet have (temporarily) flown the coop. Originally I was worried I’d end up looking perma-surprised like “Real Housewife” Ramona Singer. Instead, my eyes retained their usual squinty almond shape, but my eyebrows have a microscopic lift—a nice pick-me-up that detracts from the genetic puffiness under my eyes and fits my flirty personality.

Only side effects are a faint, pea-size-

bruise and a dull headache that goes away quickly. Bonus: I can no longer make my famous “You must be kidding me” face, which is a benefit in dating and business meetings! (No, my face doesn’t feel frozen.) Results can last four to six months, but Shermak suggests first-timers come back in 90 days for a second treatment. “It’s like a one-two punch,” she says—noting this subsequent shot will help “train” the muscles to stay put longer.

PERFECT PERLANE: My new best friend numbs the lower part of my face to reduce the discomfort of injecting the Perlane, a hyaluronic acid-based filler from the makers of Restylane but with larger gel particles for deep folds. It still hurts a bit as she works her way into the corners of my mouth and under my bottom lip, but I chill out when she tells me, “People are going to wonder why you’re so smiley—it’s because I made you that way.”

Over the next 48 hours, my usually big, goofy grin is stuck in a lemon-slice shape and my attitude is equally sour. (“I wish my face could cheer,” I complain at the Ravens game.) But I follow doctor’s orders, applying soothing Arnicare gel and massaging the ropey filler into submission. After a few days, the Perlane disperses to where I can’t feel it at all—and I’m convinced I’ve discovered The Fountain of Youth. The filler adds just enough volume to turn my unintentional frown upside down. I don’t look *different*; just happy and rested. (It’s better than Ambien!) And results can last up to a year.

FINAL VERDICT: After experiencing the artistic precision of this surgeon, I am officially addicted. I will never let any other syringe-wielding human being touch my face. Botox, \$300-\$750. Perlane, \$550-\$1,000. drshermak.com □



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