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# BOTOX YOUR WAY TO *outh*

**If** you asked her, Annie wouldn't hesitate to tell you how well she looks after her skin. She's dabbled with microdermabrasion for the past six years, has regular chemical peels and as a Christmas present, she treated herself to Botox, even though she's only 26 and has barely a wrinkle. So why all the treatments then? Annie is one of the growing number of subscribers to the "It's better to start young" school of thought when it comes to fighting the ageing process. When she tries to estimate how much she's spent on cosmetic procedures, she gets to the first \$1,000 before she stops — it's too scary. But she believes it's worth it.

But Annie is in denial. While her bank account is bleeding dollar bills in order to preserve her looks, she's inadvertently flushing all the advantages of her early anti-ageing assault down the drain. How? By smoking a pack of Marlboros every week. Lazing on the beach with SPF 4 sparingly applied. Existing on a diet of junk food and vodka Red Bulls. Scraping by on six hours of sleep a night. Basically, doing everything she shouldn't, if she's serious about looking as young as she can for as long as she can. But even though she knows how harmful it is to her looks, Annie isn't interested in adopting a healthier lifestyle. She figures the Botox, chemical peels and other anti-ageing procedures she'll invest in over the next decade will make up for it. But she's in for a rude shock. And she's not alone. Cosmetic surgeons are shaking their heads at the new wave of women in their 20s who are happy to splurge on lunch-time quick-fixes and wrinkle-zapping procedures, but aren't prepared to quit their party-hard lifestyles.

## The surgery stampede

Botox and other rejuvenating procedures — such as collagen injections and chemical peels — used to be the domain of 30- and 40-somethings who wanted to decrease the signs of ageing but weren't ready to go the whole hog with an invasive facelift. But today's 20-somethings want in on the action and aren't prepared to wait until their first wrinkle makes itself at home. In Singapore, young women have no qualms getting Botox for facial contouring, which slims down a patient's face so that it appears slim and almond-shaped, as well as reduces problems such as teeth grinding and facial asymmetry. "Botox can be addictive and because it makes you feel and look so good, you want to go back for more. I had Botox on my forehead and along my jawline to make my face look more chiselled. But I didn't go into a panic the moment the effect wore off," quips Sally Teo, CLEO's fashion director.

"There's definitely been more awareness about these treatments among young women in the past few years," says Dr Kourosh Tavakoli, a member of the Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons. "Some are worried about genetic premature ageing — they look at their mothers and think, 'I don't want to get to that stage. I'd rather do something to stop it now.' They believe prevention is better than cure." Dr Low Chai Ling of The Sloane Clinic

accedes, "I do see more women in their 20s asking for such procedures. Their rationale is that there is more pressure to look good nowadays, so they're willing to spend more on a treatment that makes a huge difference than many smaller treatments with little results. They seem to be more financially independent and view looking good as a vital part of their lives, and so invest more time and effort in their grooming."

And with many surgeries offering "lunch-time specials", the lure of the quick-fix is right up a time-poor 25-year-old's alley, especially as they don't involve scalpels or a hospital stay. "There used to be only a few anti-ageing options for younger women, like an eye lift or cheek implants, which involve serious surgery," explains Dr Tavakoli. "But now, what's to stop you from popping into the doctor's during your lunch break?"

The young cosmetic surgery fan club also sees facial rejuvenation as more financially viable than spending cash on pricey face creams that may not achieve the desired results. While microdermabrasion or Botox doesn't come cheap, Dr Tavakoli maintains that your bank account could end up better

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SALLY TEO, CLEO'S FASHION DIRECTOR

off in the long run. "One of my patients used to go for facials every three weeks, and even after a year, she couldn't get skin that one session of Mesobotox could give her. Mesobotox involves multiple superficial microinjections of diluted Botox solution into the skin to reduce oil and give the skin a mini-lift — great for younger women battling excess oil and shine," adds Dr Low.

Karla, 25, first had Botox at the age of 20 and is a firm advocate of starting anti-ageing treatments as soon as possible. "I'll try anything once if it means slowing down the ageing process. I knew I was a bit too young to have Botox but thought it couldn't hurt to try it. I also had Restylane when I was 22 to plump up my top lip, but it didn't suit me. I now have Botox twice a year and I can definitely see the difference in my skin

compared to other girls my age — they have the first stages of wrinkles, while my skin looks like it did five years ago." What sets Karla apart from her party-hard sisters, who are rushing to their nearest clinic for the latest injectable, is that she knows she has to protect her financial investments. "I'm crazy about good skincare," she says. "I wear SPF 30 daily and take vitamins designed for the skin. I drink lots of water and make sure I get at least eight hours of sleep a night. Smoking is out of the question — there's no point in having Botox if you smoke, because of all the harmful free radicals in cigarettes that work to speed up premature ageing."