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## FACE OFF

Men no longer shy away from getting beauty treatments such as Botox and filler injections



**T**he six-footer is coming down to clinch the his lower lip, sag away wrinkles and fill in facial furrows.

Men, now a common sight in wear-pumps and in the skin-care product sections of stores, are invading the clinics and going under the laser, Botox or needle to look younger and fitter.

Mr T.J. Tan, an investment banker in his 40s, started laser treatments at The Calvin Chan Aesthetic & Laser Clinic three years ago and has been going back every six months to get another job. The injections around his forehead fix a pet peeve of his: those horizontal lines across his forehead, which deepened as he aged.

He has also had the lower corners between his eyebrows smoothed out with filler injections.

"It's all about self-well-being," says Mr Tan, who is single.

Knowing that he has stopped the clock on his face now he worries about looking worn-out, allowing him to focus on more important things, he adds.

Dermatologists, plastic surgeons and doctors attached to aesthetic centres led lifestyle that over the last two years, male customers have grown from around

100 to the number of men seeking aesthetic treatments.

"This is all part of a larger cultural pattern, say doctors, that is placing a growing importance on male beauty. The Internet and television reality shows are also showing men what can be achieved with new technology. They want it."

In pop culture, the abs-led known as the Mashed Singapore male pagans will add more to 2nd edition on July 26, when a new book, *Men: How to be the man of the moment and proof for your partner* by John King, which opened last week.

Dr Low Chai Ling, medical adviser at The Sloane Clinic, a chain whose aesthetic services include plastic surgery and dermatology, says that men are just playing catch-up with what women have been doing all along.

"Men also see the benefits their female counterparts have achieved with such procedures and are more accepting of them," she noted.

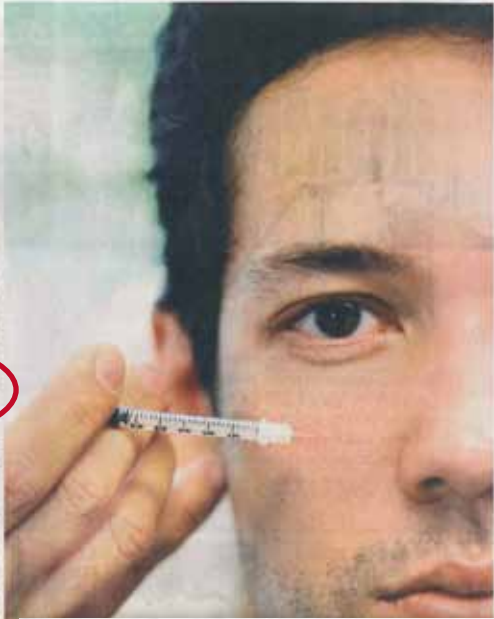
Before an upcoming publication, Dr Low Chai Ling, medical adviser at The Sloane Clinic, a chain whose aesthetic services include plastic surgery and dermatology, says that men are just playing catch-up with what women have been doing all along.

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From just 1 per cent two years ago, over now comprise 12 per cent of customers who opt for the stuff, which costs \$1,200 compared with under \$100 for laser treatments.

The same upward trend holds for men's skin care. A report from The Singapore Association of Perfumery and Cosmetics Distribution said the men's skin-care market grew 12.6 per cent over 2008 to 2010.

The women's skin-care market, in contrast, went up by 1.2 per cent over the same period. But a large part of the surge, however, must be attributed to the fact that the male skin-care market is starting from a smaller



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Dr Low says clients at The Sloane Clinic run the gamut.

"We have high-flying professionals such as lawyers who come for procedures such as eyebag surgery in order to reverse their tired look and businessmen coming for Botox to make them look more approachable," she says.

Dr Low says: "While fillers and Botox help to improve their condition, the results are not permanent and will require maintenance treatments over a certain period."

"Men do not like to take leave for treatments," says the doctor who has just injected a man's skin-care line catering to Asian skin.

At her clinic, older men like to target problem areas, so they opt for Botox, fillers and treatments that lift the skin.

Older men want to look younger while younger men opt for scar reductions, but both are willing to spend.

"Those treating their scars feel that having a better complexion will help them rise in their work and also socially," she says.

"Those targeting wrinkles and deep lines are keen to do it because there is more information about these treatments now and they also like the fact that there is no or minimal downtime."

Dermatologist Eileen Tan of Eileen Tan Skin, Laser and Hair Transplant Clinic agrees that men generally prefer non-invasive procedures such as chemical peels, intense pulsed light for facial skin and hair laser therapy.

"Botox and fillers are minimally invasive procedures that are also increasingly common among working professionals," she says.

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Dr Calvin Chan of the Calvin Chan Aesthetic & Laser Clinic adds more reasons, such as feeling men who want to show their best for their partners.

"Many male patients are brought by their wives for weight loss or anti-ageing treatments," he says.

Attractability is also a driver. Treatments range from under \$400 to more than \$5,000, offering something for men in every age group and income bracket.

The cost of treatments at various clinics ranges from around \$300 to \$500 an area for Botox and \$800 to \$900 an area for fillers.

It goes up for cosmetic surgery jobs: \$1,200 for eyelid surgery and \$4,500 for liposuction.

For bachelors with deeper pockets, there are more extreme treatments.

Dr Chan says that along with the growth in demand for invasive procedures such as liposuction to shrink beer bellies and love handles, men are also opting for more male-specific treatments.

Gaining attention in Singapore is the "Vaser Six-pack Etching" liposuction. It is a method of sucking out fat that increases the valleys and ridges of a rippled torso, says Dr Chan.

He showed Lifestyle photos of a patient who had the procedure done and the result looked uncannily close to the real thing. The cost of looking like a man who does a thousand crunches a day starts at \$6,000.

However, clients seeking help must know that such treatment carries different health risks.

Senior consultant Dr Chua Sue Hon of The National Skin Centre advises those seeking certain kinds of treatment to exercise caution.

For example, some places offer non-invasive slimming by either heating or cooling the skin's fat layer, which destroys it and causes it to be excreted by the body.

Dr Chua notes: "Inappropriate treatment may result in excessive localized fat destruction, causing unsightly skin depression and dimpling."

Damage to the surface skin may also occur, causing blisters, skin rashes and subsequent scarring."

The treating of the skin using radio waves should also be approached with discretion.

"Inappropriate treatment may result in skin damage, causing skin burns and possible scarring. Deep skin nodules from deep scarring may occur if the lower layer of the skin is heated up excessively."

The treatment may also cause pigmentation if the upper layers of the skin are heated up excessively," he says.

Dr Tan adds that during consultation, the patient should be told that such treatments need to be done several times over for full effect. "Non-invasive treatments are not permanent," she says.

Dr Low says: "While fillers and Botox help to improve their condition, the results are not permanent and will require maintenance treatments over a certain period."

Mr T.J. Tan is aware that people still get into laser, but the idea of men who get under the laser or knife when have to look better than their fathers did when they were the same age, but have to pretend that they have not put any effort into priming because it looks unmanly, he says. This is why he chose not to give his full name.

But at Singapore becomes more cosmopolitan, the desire for eternal youth in both men and women will grow, as it has in the West.

"For men, the search for youth is here to stay. It's no lie," he declares.

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John Lui gives beauty treatments a try: See facing page