



## **Boomers, Betting on, crave the skin of youth**

**By Debra Black, Life writer**

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For better or for worse, it's a holy grail of medical research; the quest to cure wrinkles.

Chemists and dermatologists at pharmaceutical companies, universities and cosmetic firms are pursuing smooth skin with the same determination – and for the same, if not greater financial stakes – that their colleagues labouring to find a cure for cancer and AIDS.

Every year, millions, perhaps even billions, of dollars – nobody knows for sure – are spent in pursuit of something that might erase the ravages of time, whether it be potion, pill or plexiglass.

“Wrinkle management is an enormous field,” says Dr. Fred Weksberg, a cosmetic dermatologist and instructor at University of Toronto’s School of Medicine. “There’s a lot of money and a lot of time apart on it.”

To some degree, the investment has paid off. “We can’t prevent it (wrinkling) totally,” admits Weksberg. “But we can slow it down and sometimes reverse some of the changes.”

Weksberg and others point to Botox, just approved by Health Canada for frown lines, as just one of the newer forms of wrinkles treatments. A form of botulism toxin that is injected into the skin, it’s described by many dermatologists as a highly effective means of putting a halt to wrinkles, if only temporarily.

But it doesn’t come cheap. Botox treatments cost anywhere from \$200 to \$500 each, says Weksberg. Still, it’s only one of numerous non-invasive treatments aimed at wiping away the years, that have been developed, researched and studied in recent years.

These include Retin A, glycolic acid, collagen, Artecoll – a mixture of collagen and plexiglass beads – and Vitamin C creams. For more serious wrinkling, dermatologists often recommend dermabrasion and laser treatment. And of course, there’s always the face lift.

Affluent, aging baby boomers are a prime market for these treatments, says Weksberg. “Nowadays, there’s no shame in saying: ‘I’m aging. I don’t like my wrinkles and I want to look younger,’ especially with baby boomers.”

“When you buy it, it’s strong. If it’s left out in the sun, it breaks down. The fibers break. That’s what happening in skin. As you age, the amount of collagen decreases in your dermis and it breaks down.”

Anti-wrinkling research has had some unusual spinoffs. Botox, for example, is now employed to combat migraine headaches and chronic pain in the jaw.

“Most of the wrinkle research is funded by industry for good straight capital reasons,” says Dr. Alastair Carruthers, the Vancouver dermatologist, who, along with his wife, Dr. Jean Carruthers pioneered the use of cosmetic Botox. “And there has been a pretty dramatic increase (in research) and that has been bearing fruit as there is now a significant number of options (to treat wrinkles).

“We’ve got quite a number of new products which are available and looking ahead you can see we’re going to have more products and procedures in the next while.”



Cosmetic Botox is just one of these options. It's used along the forehead to erase frown lines or around the eyes to erase wrinkles. "It's relatively simple from a consumer point of view," he says. "You sit there and get a few needle pricks. There is no down time. You're back to work. The side effects are zero and it works with a capital W."

This has set a new standard for boomers, notes Carruthers. A wrinkle free face has become just another part of good grooming for many, he says.

"It's part of maintenance. You go and have a mammogram and pap smear. You brush your hair and you select your clothes carefully.

And what does Carruthers think about the desire of many baby boomers to look young? He speculates that it may be an issue of the hard wiring of the brain and what individuals perceive to be attractive. As evidence, he points to an article in the Royal Society of Medicine's Journal which examined why some consider fuller lips to be more desirable.

When women, it seems, are in a high estrogen state, they have fuller lips. And that state is associated with greater fertility and more desirable appearance.

The same might be said of wrinkles. Face it folks. Without them, people just look more desirable and sexual.