

A-HED

Botox Shot or Covid Boost? The Combo Causes Some Seasonal Wrinkles

Doctors advise patients seeking cosmetic treatments not to get a vaccine shot two weeks before or after their procedure to avoid the risk of swelling

By Alina Dizik

Dec. 27, 2021 10:54 am ET

Amanda Madison wanted to look fresh in time for her 50th birthday this winter. The Covid-19 vaccine booster threw a wrinkle into her plan.



She had time to add more volume to her lips and cheeks before her birthday bash, but needed to wait two weeks before and a further two weeks after getting her Covid booster shot before adding additional treatments to achieve “a fresh new start” for the New Year.

Spas and dermatology practices dealing with the holiday injections rush have an unexpected challenge this year: helping patients navigate Covid-19 boosters.

This won't hurt a bit “It's hard to get everything in,” says Ms. Madison, who lives in Los Angeles.

Many dermatologists advise clients to put time between vaccinations and injections of fillers—gel-like substances used to plump up skin. In rare cases, mRNA vaccines have been linked to an inflammatory reaction to hyaluronic acid-based dermal fillers, the most common kind, according to case reports and research published in the Archives of Dermatological Research earlier this year. That can complicate holiday-season treatments, especially as Omicron increases the need for boosters.

People should wait two to three weeks between fillers and the Covid-19 vaccine to avoid a risk of swelling in areas where facial fillers were injected, says Gregory Greco, president-

elect of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. He encourages patients not to put off the vaccine due to fillers. “We don’t want people to delay boosters for fillers,” he says.

Ashlee Kleinschmidt in Westwood, N.J., waited for a month to get her fillers after getting her second vaccine this fall. As the owner of a makeup salon, Muah Makeup & Lash Bar, Ms. Kleinschmidt says she keeps to a regular injection schedule to look her best on social media.

Getting both Botox and facial fillers later than planned meant it was too early to go back for Botox before New Year celebrations.

“I’ll still be OK—my freeze is starting to unfreeze, but no deep wrinkles,” she says.

Fillers are different than Botox and other injections that relax muscles.



Kristina Kitsos, a nurse in Beverly Hills, Calif.

PHOTO: LAURA BRAVO MERTZ

Kristina Kitsos, a registered aesthetic nurse in Beverly Hills, Calif., where Ms. Madison is a longtime client, asks patients to wait two weeks before and after fillers or Botox before

getting the vaccine. Though Botox and other wrinkle-relaxing injections aren't known to cause a reaction, Ms. Kitsos feels safer telling patients to wait for both.

She's seeing more patients book appointments in January to avoid any unexpected swelling during holiday gatherings—even if it is now possible to hide some of it under a mask.

“You have to add in the possibility of bruising and swelling during Christmas parties,” she says.

Others are going for it anyway. After getting her vaccine this spring, Marie Burke decided not to wait a full two weeks to get her fillers. She had no problems with the facial fillers and is already planning Botox injections before the New Year—less than a week after getting her booster. After reading about the isolated cases and speaking to her injector, Ms. Burke, who lives in Roswell, Ga., decided to keep her schedule. “Personally, I don't have any concerns,” she says.

The chances of unwanted side effects as a result of facial fillers and the vaccine are extremely small, says physician Alain Michon. He has seen two patients experience this type of swelling in his Ottawa-based aesthetic practice and published research in the *Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology* earlier this year. He estimates that less than 1% of patients experience vaccine-associated posttreatment swelling in areas where they have had injections.

Three cases of facial swelling after dermal fillers and the vaccine were first mentioned during the Moderna Phase 3 clinical trial. The CDC doesn't mention a waiting period for dermal fillers, but advises people who see swelling to contact a healthcare professional for an evaluation.

Even with more challenges navigating facial fillers this winter, it is unlikely to slow the rise in popularity. With ongoing work-from-home setups, many people are more aware of how their faces look on screen in what's now described as the Zoom effect. Demand has doubled this year with younger patients looking to add Botox and dermal filler to their routine, says Mark McKenna, founder of OVME Aesthetics in Atlanta. The potential complication from the Covid-19 vaccine is now part of the spa's consent paperwork.

“We inform all of our clients that swelling due to the Covid vaccine is a possibility,” Dr. McKenna says.



Vanessa Coppola, owner of Bare Aesthetic in New Jersey.

PHOTO: BARE AESTHETIC

Vanessa Coppola, owner of Bare Aesthetic in Closter, N.J., says though most clients choose to wait, she has followed up by phone with those who decided to do the injections around the time of their vaccine. So far, no one has complained.

“It doesn’t mean you’re vain,” says Ms. Coppola, who is a nurse practitioner. “It’s really just feeling like you can live your best life.”

Write to Alina Dizik at alina.dizik@wsj.com

Appeared in the December 28, 2021, print edition as ‘Covid Shots Cause Botox Wrinkles.’