

[Home](#) > [Media](#) > [On the Web](#) > [Can BOTOX Really Treat Depression?](#)

## Can BOTOX Really Treat Depression?



A time of joy, the holidays can be an exceptionally sad time for those suffering from depression. A new study shows that a popular beauty treatment may actually relieve some of these symptoms. BOTOX<sup>®</sup>: the injection of botulinum toxin to decrease the appearance of fine lines, crow's feet, and wrinkles in both men and women can now possibly be used to treat depression. The common complaint of BOTOX<sup>®</sup> consumers is that those injections make it hard to convey feelings on the face. However, it may actually be a good thing for people with treatment-resistant depression.

In an independent study published in the May 2012 issue of the *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, researchers selected 30 participants who were suffering from long-term drug-resistant depression. Half the participants were given five injections of BOTOX<sup>®</sup> between and just above the eyebrows while the other half were given placebo injections in the same place. After six weeks, health care professionals noted the patients' depressive symptoms—such as sullen mood, insomnia, and weight loss—and reported it back to researchers.

What they found was astonishing. While the control group only had a 9 percent reduction in depressive symptoms, those who were injected with BOTOX<sup>®</sup> saw a whopping 47 percent decrease in the same symptoms. These mood elevations stayed steady throughout the 16-week study period for both groups.

M. Axel Wollmer, a psychiatrist at the University of Basel in Switzerland and the lead author on the study, believes the treatment "interrupts feedback from the facial musculature to the brain, which may be involved in the development and maintenance of negative emotions." Your facial muscles might not just display your feelings to the world; they can tell your brain how to feel, too.

Since Botox<sup>®</sup> relaxes those muscles that convey feelings, it can also trick your brain. "BOTOX<sup>®</sup> is effective in this instance due to the display of emotions. Not only are facial muscles important in communicating how you feel, they are also essential in actually experiencing them," stated Dr. Adam Schaffner, a plastic surgeon based in New York. "Disrupting the body's ability to

portray the emotion makes it difficult to even feel it.”

Previous studies have shown that BOTOX<sup>®</sup> weakens a person’s ability to identify other people’s feelings. Piggybacking on that finding, this new study shows that face muscles are just as important for identifying and experiencing emotions as they are for displaying them. According to Dr. Schaffner: “This study opens a world of possibilities for modern medicine. If a simple plastic surgery procedure can help treat a serious mental disorder, what other opportunities lie in seemingly unconnected areas of the medical field?”

[<Back to On the Web](#)

**Adam D. Schaffner, M.D., F.A.C.S.**

Tel (212) 688-6600 | Fax (212) 688-6602 | 970 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10028