

Smile!

Writer Judy McGuire heard that having Botox could make you look AND feel happier, so grumpily gave it a go...



'Could I wipe that miserable look off my face and cheer up too?'



Judy manages a grin while Lee marks the spot...



Judy casts a last anxious glance at the syringe

Cheer up love! It might never happen! I wish I'd pocketed a pound for every time someone's said that to me. I happen to have one of those faces – naturally miserable, however cheerful I might be inside. Lately, though, the last thing I've been feeling is cheerful – you know, the usual worries that descend on us all from time to time. Life.

Not enough to demand anti-depressants, but enough to notice that the frown etched on my forehead seemed to have taken up almost permanent residence. So I was fascinated to see that research by a doctor at Cardiff University showed that having Botox to get rid of frown lines can actually make people happier. Could I wipe that miserable look off my face and cheer up at the same time?

I called the research psychologist, Michael Lewis, who explained that if you use Botox to paralyse the frown muscles, you can't frown, and if you can't frown, it's harder to feel negative emotions.

Patients who had Botox treatment were found to be less depressed and irritable than those who did not. 'The way we express emotions influences the way we feel,' Dr Lewis told me. 'When we smile we feel happier. Stop ourselves frowning, and it leaves us feeling less sad.'

With my husband's suspiciously enthusiastic



support (I think waking up to Nora Batty's face next to

him was taking its toll). I took my frown along to see Lee Garrett, a nurse practitioner in London's Harley Street. Lee's a skin magician who's worked miracles on countless women with a variety of cosmetic treatments. Botox is still one of the most popular, and he's noticed its mood-enhancing side-effects on his patients.

He drew dots on my frown muscles to indicate where he'd inject the toxin, then you feel a tiny sting that's over in seconds. The effect isn't instantaneous, so I left the clinic with the same black cloud following me down the street. This is never going to work, I thought.

Life resumed its grinding, miserable course, then, wait a second, what was that noise? It was me, whistling a merry tune while I put the rubbish out! I suddenly realised I was feeling pretty good about the world. Recession? Oh well, we'll

manage. Long hours at my computer? Never mind, there's nothing on telly anyway.

I checked in the mirror. Yes, my frown had gone. I simply couldn't look grumpy, even if I tried. I found myself smiling at strangers. I felt lighter, more cheerful – even happy! My chums commented, 'You're in a good mood!' They were right. I was taking pleasure in life in a way that had been eluding me for too long, and not one person told me, 'Cheer up, love!'

It won't last, of course. Lee says I'll need a top-up in four months' time, although if I keep doing it, eventually the muscles will be retrained and I'll get by on just a couple of sessions a year. I will keep it up though, if only for the sake of my long-suffering husband. He's glad to see the back of Nora Batty! ☺

* Judy went to Lee Garrett at Freedom Health, 020 7637 1600, freedomhealth.co.uk

Want to turn that frown upside down?

- * Use a qualified medical practitioner.
- * Avoid lying down for four hours after treatment, to prevent the Botox moving.
- * Don't rub the area or wear make-up for the rest of the day, to avoid infection.
- * Do not have Botox if you're pregnant, nursing, have diabetes or any autoimmune disease.
- * Tell your practitioner about other medication you're taking, as there may be a reaction.