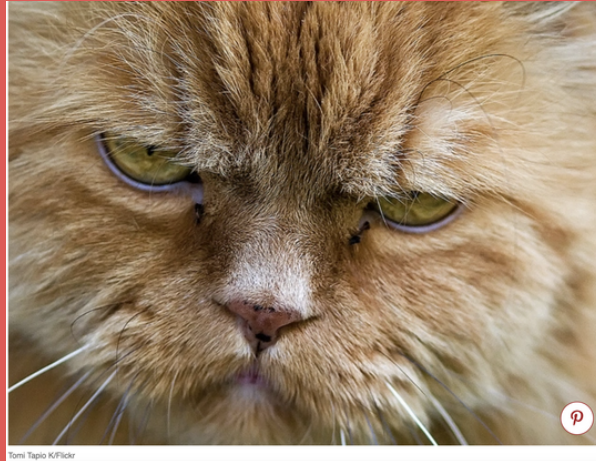


I got injections to fix my resting angry face



by MICHELE SPONAGLE  MAY 10, 2016 AT 4:30PM PM EDT



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You've probably heard of "resting bitch face," but I have "resting angry face." My face looks like it's in a state of permanent annoyance. "What's wrong?" friends would ask me. "Nothing! This is just the way my face is." And I didn't like it.

I didn't always look pissed off. Aging made me look that way, thanks to two deep vertical lines in between my brows. They've developed over the last decade, slowly becoming more noticeable with every passing year.

I did what I could to slow their progression. I wore sunglasses to prevent squinting, learned to meditate to relax my face and applied sunscreen faithfully. I also tried a slew of anti-aging creams with labels that used words like "intensive," "line eraser" and "miracle." But there were no miracles to be found among them. Sometimes I could see a slight improvement, but that was wishful thinking, a way to rationalize how much money I spent on those products.

My creases formed a perfect number 11, also known as glabellar lines, on my face. I grew weary at the reflection scowling back at me. It was difficult to ignore what I saw. When I complained, my boyfriend told me, "I don't really notice them — much."

That word "much" sparked me to do what I really wanted to do, but put off because I thought it was too decadent, too expensive and, well, too self-indulgent. True to my Virgo nature, I'm a practical person, but it handcuffs me sometimes in doing or spending money on things I want.

But these bothersome lines were really bugging me, despite having a healthy self-esteem. I looked out of sync with how I felt. I phoned the office of a dermatologist I knew as a journalist and had interviewed for various stories. Dr. Sheetal Sapra was blessedly spin-free when I asked him for his opinion about cosmetic ingredients, trendy new facials and everything else.

Sitting in a chair at his clinic, ICLS Dermatology & Plastic Surgery in Oakville, Ontario, he was straight up when I told him I wanted these number 11 lines gone for good. "There is no cream that will fix them," he said. "And there are very few permanent solutions outside of a brow lift. But with a combination of Botox and filler, I can make them look a whole lot better."

I had some magical expectations about fillers that could be injected into my lines and be done with it. While there are permanent fillers, most doctors won't go near them anymore. There are just too many potential complications and filler can shift from the injection site and migrate over time into places where they shouldn't go.

So I decided to do the Botox-filler combo. They applied topical numbing cream to my face and I sat for about 20 minutes waiting for it to kick in. Then it was showtime. My stomach did an anxiety flip at the sight of needles spread over a metal tray. I'm not a fan of them and I've even had cavities filled without freezing to avoid them.

But my nurse, Kelly Mraud, was super gentle and gave me forewarning before I received my first shot of filler into one of my deep lines. It was a sharp pinch that lasted a few seconds and then stopped. I took a deep breath in preparation for the second injection on the left side. It wasn't too bad. Then, with her fingertips, she nudged the filler into place and smoothed it into the groove.

It's kind of like plasticine that you can mold into shape, Kelly told me. She squeezed a bit of filler onto the back of my hand so I could feel it. It was more like Vaseline, clear, thick and smooth. The filler she used was Juvéderm and it contained a bit of lidocaine to take away some discomfort. It's like many of the ones available on the market, formulated with hyaluronic acid, a naturally occurring sugar found in the body.

Next up, Botox to stop the muscles that helped form my lines over many years with repeated frowning. I had 11 little injections over my brow, but these were a little less painful, thanks to a very fine and blessedly short needle. I was given a couple of ice packs to apply to my forehead to ease the pain and to prevent bruising so I didn't leave the clinic looking like I had been in a bar fight.

I was told not to expect too much in the way of results right away. The Botox would take up to 48 hours to really kick in for full effect. But when I was handed a mirror to take a look at my face, I could already see a big difference. My resting angry face wasn't very angry anymore.

Based on what I see in the mirror today, it was well worth the \$820 Canadian (approx. \$640 in U.S. dollars) it cost for 32 units of Botox at \$10 each and one syringe worth of Juvéderm for \$500). Hot tip: If you are planning a trip to Canada anytime soon, take advantage of the strong U.S. dollar and get treatments there for less.

My filler will last a year or two before I need to top it again, but Botox will need touching up every three to six months. Perhaps I'll consider a brow lift for a more permanent, maintenance-free option because I feel more like me again and that's exactly what I needed.