

# BARGAIN BOTOX

Why discount injections can be costly.

BY RACHEL NAUD

**M**egan Kozak's patient learned the hard way not to trust discount injectors when she walked into Kozak's Pout office in Toronto with lumpy lips.

She had undergone lip augmentation at a discounted injector and was simply shooed away when she had inquired about the lumpiness. The injector told her the lumps were normal and due to swelling. The only thing is, the lumps never subsided.

"When I asked her what product was used in her lips, she had no idea," says Megan Kozak, RN, a certified aesthetic injector and co-owner of Pout in Toronto. "She was unaware of all the risks associated with

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—DR. WAYNE CARMAN,  
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PHOTOS: THINKSTOCK

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treatment and expressed that all the information I had given her was completely new information to her.”

The situation is all too common, says Kozak, who says many patients are lured to discount sites, such as Groupon, offering injections on the cheap.

“It scares me knowing that patients interested in these procedures are looking to Groupon, Kijiji ads and basement injectors,” says Kozak. “Patients are charmed by the extremely low pricing, but they don't understand the possible consequences and risks they are taking by seeking out medical services from non-medical practices. One should be wary of people selling these services at such great discounts as they might not be using proper products, techniques and instruments or following proper protocols to shave costs and make a profit.”

#### RISKY BUSINESS

Although some people in search of a smoother, fuller complexion might not see injections as a medical procedure, Botulinum toxin and dermal filler procedures are, in fact, medical treatments by nature. This means, as with anything medical, they come with their own associated risks.

Dr. Wayne Carman, MD, FRCSC, director of the Cosmetic Surgery Institute in Toronto, says one of the greatest risks of getting injections from unqualified companies or injectors is that they won't be equipped to deal with the aftermath if something goes wrong.

“Even if the person knows how to do the injection, they could be using inappropriate material,” he says. “They could be using an industrial chemical that has no business being injected in the first place. And then they have no medical knowledge or understanding of possible side effects.”

Complications, he says, can range from minor to devastating and include things like lumps, bumps and infections to dead skin and blocked blood vessels.

“If any complications should happen, you need an immediate response as far as treatment goes,” says Dr. Carman. “If you go to the hospital three days later, they're not going to know what to do. They deal with broken legs. They'll refer you back to the injector, who could be gone by then. You need to get injections performed by professionals who are prepared to deal with any complications immediately.”

#### FINDING TRUSTWORTHY TREATMENTS

When searching for reputable injectors, Kozak's first piece of advice: Avoid Groupon and Kijiji ads. “If the price is too good to be true, it probably is,” she says. “No qualified medical practitioner would devalue their expertise to be sold for so little.”

Next, she says to do your research and ensure that the physician or nurse doing the injections is licensed. Double-check their credentials, says Kozak, “but don't forget that there is a technical skill level and an artistic component to injectable procedures, so one should get familiar with the injector's background prior to their first visit.”

When it comes to dermatologists, nurses and physicians, technique often boils down to experience, which is something you may want to inquire about.

“Having a background in a medical discipline is very important with regard to safety, proper procedure, and proper emergency protocol, but technical and artistic abilities come down to the style and experience of the injector alone,” says Kozak.

Lastly, when you go for your consult, if they're promising to get you in and out in five minutes, just walk away. “A proper consultation should take approximately 20 minutes for the injector to thoroughly educate you on the procedures and the potential risks associated with them,” says Kozak. “A five-minute consultation should be a red flag.”

