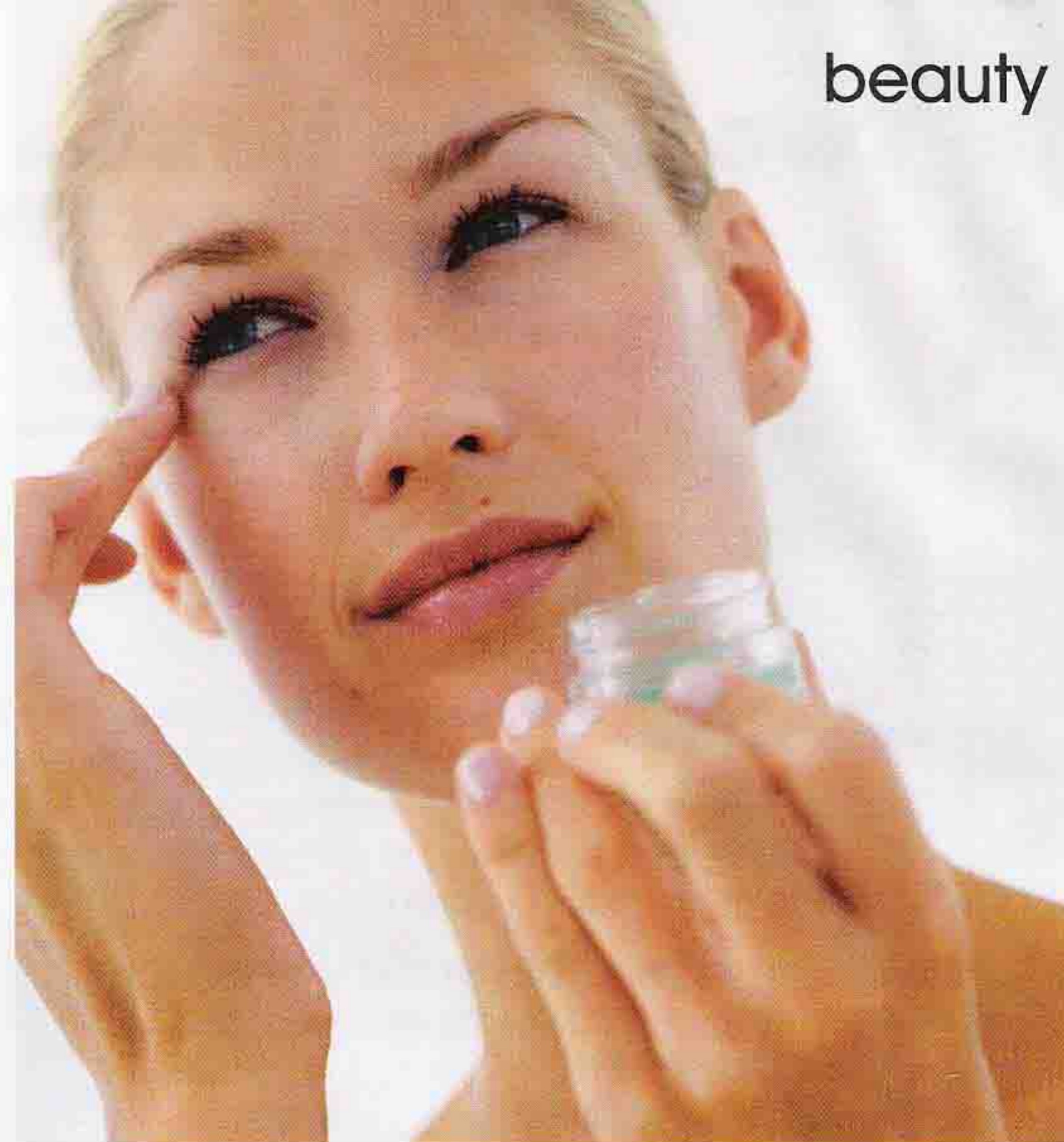


WRINKLE BUSTERS

Forget Botox – the latest smoothing products could blitz your laughter lines in a more natural way.

Charlotte Haigh investigates



TV programmes often show women having a quick shot of Botox, then emerging looking smooth-faced a few minutes later. Getting rid of your wrinkles like this looks easy and painless – but that's not the full story.

How does Botox (full name Botulinum Toxin Type A) work? The botulinum bacterium is highly diluted then injected into muscle beneath the skin. The muscle then relaxes, softening expression lines and contours. It's particularly effective at hiding early signs of ageing, such as crow's feet or fine lines on your forehead. So far, so good.

But there are plenty of downsides. Botox is temporary, lasting just three to four months, and the average price is around £250 a shot, so it's not cheap. It can't tackle all the signs of ageing, either – just those caused by expressions. It won't, for example, deal with wrinkles caused by sun damage. What's more, if it's done poorly, you could end up with a droopy eye or the freakishly expressionless look sported by celebs who've overdone it. We don't yet know the long-term effects of having injections like this, but some experts think it could even create new wrinkles by forcing different muscles to work rather than the paralysed ones.

WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

There are now lots of wrinkle-fighters on offer, which claim to target specific areas in the same way as injectibles. Many of the new creams that say they mimic Botox are based on hexapeptides – natural amino acids that reduce quantities of the enzyme needed for muscle contraction. The creams aim to stop our facial muscles contracting so frequently, leading to fewer wrinkles. In a clinical study published in the *International Journal of Cosmetic Science*, one of the amino acids, acetyl hexapeptide-3 (also known as argireline) was shown to reduce the depth of wrinkles by up to 30 per cent after 30 days of use at a 10 per cent concentration, though more research is needed to discover the long-term effects.

'Other ingredients to look out for include pentapeptides, which mimic the skin's natural protein growth, and seaweed extract, which boosts collagen production and inhibits the enzymes that break down the skin's natural structural support,' says Sally Penford, education manager at the International Dermal Institute. While these ingredients may

not have the overnight dramatic effect that Botox and cosmetic surgery can give, over time you should see an improvement in skin texture and firmness, and using them early enough can delay the first signs of ageing. Most of these products, including those mentioned below, boast visible results within 14 days to a month.

LONG-TERM PLAN

In the longer term, your main anti-wrinkle strategy should still be skincare. Look for products containing traditional anti-ageing ingredients, such as antioxidant vitamins A, C and E. 'Vitamin A can help diminish wrinkle depth, as it has a gentle inflammatory action which helps "puff up" the skin, while vitamin C has a brightening effect, boosting circulation and collagen production,' says Josephine Fairley, author of the *21st Century Beauty Bible* (Kyle Cathie, £14.99). And, of course, don't forget to wear SPF15 whenever you go outdoors, and stay out of the sun.

Four of the best...

Elemis Pro-Collagen Wrinkle Smooth, £85 for 4ml. Call 01278 727830; www.timetospa.co.uk

With ingredients such as seaweed pavina pavonica, which boosts skin-smoothing calcium, and mineral montmorillonite, which absorbs water and helps to plump out skin cells.



Dr Denese Line-Erase non-injectible Wrinkle Relaxing Serum, £59.50 for 15ml. Call 0870-190 0003; www.drdenese.co.uk

This contains wrinkle relaxant argireline. In clinical studies, the serum helped reduce wrinkle depth by 50 per cent and fine lines by up to 62 per cent.



DDF Wrinkle Relax, £75 for 15 ml. Call 020 7235 5000

This boasts a pentapeptide and a hexapeptide to help prevent lines caused by facial movements, along with skin-firming shiitake mushroom extract and white tea, which helps reduce puffiness.



Dermologica Power Rich, £110 for five tubes of 100ml each. Call 0800-591818

Pentapeptides, seaweed concentrate and regenerating vitamins A, C, E and B5 are present in this product, plus acid-free technology to improve the skin's texture and firmness.



WRINKLE ZAPPERS

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