

5 medical products with newfound cosmetic purposes

Medicine is littered with lucky accidents. Take botulinum toxin type A, discovered in the 1800s. We all know Botox can smooth out those pesky forehead furrows. But did you realize it was originally approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 1989 to address eye spasms and eye muscle problems in patients 12 and older?

It is now approved for excess underarm sweating, neck pain and abnormal head position due to cervical dystonia, and, of course, for the forehead.

More recently, "it's now one of the greatest treatments for migraines," said Dr. Michael McGuire, president of the [American Society of Plastic Surgeons](#). "Patients who were using Botox for frown lines were saying how they were not getting headaches anymore. A curious physician picks up and starts looking into it ... it was pure coincidence."



Samir Hussein, Getty

Botox isn't the first and only product that developed a second -- or third -- life as a beauty treatment, thanks in part to happenstance. Here are five more that are helping people stay youthful:

Latisse

This lash thickener started life as a prescription eye drop medication for glaucoma patients. Then reports that users of Lumigan developed long, luscious eyelashes caught the eye of manufacturer Allergan. In 2008, the company scored FDA approval as a lash thickener.

Now [Brooke Shields](#) is in commercials and ads touting the miraculous ability of [Latisse](#) to thicken, elongate, and darken eyelashes. Just remember that the more than \$100 tube still requires a doctor's prescription and oversight. After all, side effects range from the minor (itchy eyes) to the serious (permanent darkening of light-colored irises).

Sculptra

This poly-L-lactic acid was approved by the FDA in 2004 to help HIV patients suffering from fat loss in their faces, also known as facial lipoatrophy, for up to two years. But in Mexico and Europe, it was also being used as a wrinkle filler, because it helps stimulate the body's own collagen, thickening the dermis.

"You can see healthier, thicker skin, and it replenishes what we tend to lose as we age," explained [Dr. Cheryl M. Burgess](#), medical director of the Center for Dermatology in Washington, D.C. "It is most helpful with post-menopausal women. When women lose estrogen, their skin tends to thin out."

Another five years would pass before [Sculptra](#) was approved in the U.S. as a filler for folds around the mouth and chin wrinkles. Although it's been on the market for only 10 months, it's already being used off label in areas like the hands.

Radiesse

Made of synthetic calcium carbonate microspheres, [Radiesse](#) was originally designed to help those with voice problems and certain dental defects. But in 2006, BioForm Medical successfully won FDA approval for it to be used as a wrinkle filler and to help treat HIV patients suffering from facial lipoatrophy (fat loss). Thanks to instant results and a staying power of at least a year, Radiesse is being used beyond facial wrinkles and areas like the smile lines.

Some physicians are injecting it into areas like the jaw line, nose and cheeks. "I use it as a non-surgical facial sculpting tool much more often than to fill wrinkles," said [Dr. Alexander Rivkin](#), founder of Westside Aesthetics

in Los Angeles. For example, with noses, he applies Radiesse "to lift up the tip, to camouflage a bump, to straighten asymmetry, to raise and better define the bridge and other rhinoplasty goals."

Preparation H

You've heard the stories: Got puffy eyes or unwanted wrinkles? Slap on some Preparation H, the hemorrhoid cream. Unfortunately, that only works if you have the version that has Biodyne in it. There are several formulations of Prep H on store shelves these days, but the one with Biodyne has been available only in Canada since the mid 1990s, when the FDA required manufacturer Wyeth to reformulate the over-the-counter product.

Then two years ago, Prep H found a new audience: young men. Prep H with phenylephrine, a natural vasoconstrictor that temporarily constricts blood vessels, was being slathered on love handles and abs. They discovered what professional bodybuilders have known for some time: phenylephrine removes excess water, giving the illusion of a leaner, more sculpted region for a few hours.

Dr. Scholls Liquid Corn & Callus Remover

The high salicylic acid content of this liquid (17%) has made it a popular home remedy in recent years to remove age spots and other blemishes. Not to mention the price is just right -- about \$6.50. Still, [Dr. Daniel Behroozan](#), a Beverly Hills dermatologist, cautioned against using it as a face peel, as you "run the risk of burning your face. People should really do peels under the supervision of doctors who can determine what type of peel [to use], what percentage and how long to leave it."