

No, it's not Blind Man's Buff, but it is the latest parlour game: at Botox Parties, you can have reduced-rate injections to smooth your furrowed brow – as well as nibbles and a glass of wine



# I'll take a Chablis and a shot of botulism, please

Forget coffee mornings; the new social gathering is the Botox afternoon

**Cheese-and-pineapple cubes** on a stick, a slurp of Chardonnay, a natter to your friends, and an injection of purified botulism to perk up your face. It might not sound like the perfect ingredients for a party, but it is precisely what's on offer at Mr Prakash's Harley Street clinic.

Botox – dubbed the 'lunchtime facelift' because you can be in, out and back at work in under an hour – is so popular that many cosmetic surgeons in London are now working flat out. Punters love

it because it is quick, subtle and relatively risk-free. Professor Nicholas Lowe, who recently delivered his research results to the American Academy of Dermatology, confirms that the substance, when used in tiny amounts, is safe, and results can be as good as those produced by a full brow lift.

Hardly surprising, then, that the procedure has taken off. In the past year, use of Botox has doubled in the UK. Unlike many rejuvenating techniques which tend to stay in the closet, Botox is chatted



about by Botoxees. And now they can indulge at the Botox Afternoon – a do where they can mingle with 'the deadliest poison on the planet', a form of the botulism bacteria used by Saddam Hussein for chemical warfare. For group rates of £150 a shot (instead of the £250 it costs an individual), Mr Prakash injects muscles on the face and neck, paralysing those that make you frown, give you crow's-feet or make your neck sag.

A recent gathering at his clinic turned into a rather jolly affair. Cheese and wine were dispensed as patients sat waiting for local anaesthetic creams to take effect. Although some patients preferred not to be identified as they had taken 'sick leave' from work, all were happy to linger once they'd had their fix, chatting away from under their ice-packs.

Jane Jenkins, a 34-year-old publishing executive, said: 'I'm meant to be at work but the chance of half-price Botox was too good to miss. It's been great chatting to other patients; the atmosphere is

more like being at the hairdresser than anything medical. I felt a bit woozy last time but being one of a group takes your mind off yourself completely.'

Sylvia Dean, 60, agreed: 'I think I was Mr Prakash's first Botox patient about four years ago and have been having it twice-yearly since. I've loved having a natter – it beats hanging around in a soulless waiting-room. I was chatting so much I couldn't be bothered to have the anaesthetic cream put on.'

After injecting for four hours, Mr Prakash pronounced the party a success. 'I hope to make this a regular event,' he smiled. 'The reduced price makes the treatment far more accessible, and the atmosphere is relaxed and casual, which helps if you're apprehensive to start with.'

Other events on the Botox grapevine include surgeon Jan Stanek's group session next month and a get-together at Lasercare. One guarantee: they'll give you more of a lift than an Ann Summers party ever could. **BONNIE ESTRIDGE**  
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