

Cosmetic injections – tips to help you make an informed decision

Last updated:

23 July 2019

Cosmetic injections are medical procedures that involve injecting a substance under your skin to change an aspect of your appearance (e.g. reducing the appearance of wrinkles or lines on your face). If used incorrectly, the substances in these injections could cause skin damage, blindness or even death.

If you are considering a cosmetic injection, use this information to carefully research both the products and the health practitioners involved.

Attend a consultation

The products used in cosmetic injections require a prescription from a registered medical practitioner. The doctor authorising the administration of the injection must consult with you and fully explain the procedure before the treatment goes ahead. This consultation should always occur face-to-face, either in person or via video conference.

Make a list of your questions or concerns and bring these along to your consultation. You should be provided with enough information for you to make an informed decision, including possible risks and complications. Your informed consent in writing should be obtained before the procedure goes ahead. Make sure to give yourself time to think about all that is involved before agreeing to anything. See our fact sheet [‘things to consider before undergoing procedures involving dermal fillers \(https://www.tga.gov.au/node/151126\)’](https://www.tga.gov.au/node/151126), for tips on questions to ask during a consultation.

Check that the clinic is operating legally

A legal requirement is for cosmetic injection clinics to be licenced. However, illegal procedures often take place in various locations including beauty clinics, residential homes and hotel rooms, including airports.

To find out if the clinic is licenced, contact the local council or territory government in the area the clinic is located.

Check the registration status of the health practitioners involved

You should check that both the doctor who prescribes the cosmetic injection product and the health practitioner who administers the injection are registered. The register of practitioners can be searched on the [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency's \(AHPRa\) \(https://www.ahpra.gov.au/\)](https://www.ahpra.gov.au/) website.

The [Medical Board of Australia's \(https://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Policies/Cosmetic-medical-and-surgical-procedures-guidelines.aspx\)](https://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Policies/Cosmetic-medical-and-surgical-procedures-guidelines.aspx) guidelines for registered medical practitioners who perform cosmetic medical and surgical procedures, outline the requirements for medical practitioners prescribing and administering cosmetic injection products.

In limited cases, nurse practitioners and dentists may prescribe cosmetic injection products. The [Dental Board of Australia \(https://www.dentalboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/FAQ/botulinum-toxin-and-dermal-fillers.aspx\)](https://www.dentalboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/FAQ/botulinum-toxin-and-dermal-fillers.aspx) has published a fact sheet outlining expectations of dentists performing cosmetic injections. The [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia \(https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Position-Statements/nurses-and-cosmetic-procedures.aspx\)](https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Position-Statements/nurses-and-cosmetic-procedures.aspx) has also issued a position statement outlining expectations of nurses working in the area of cosmetic procedures. Cosmetic registered nurses administering cosmetic injections must be supervised by a doctor.

Reputable, registered health practitioners are less likely to be involved in the illegal importation and/or use of dangerous counterfeit products. You can avoid these products by ensuring you are prescribed a product that has been approved by the TGA.

Check that the health practitioners involved are suitably experienced

Your registered health practitioner must have the appropriate knowledge and training.

Ask your registered health practitioner how much experience they have with this type of procedure. They must also ensure that anyone else involved in the procedure is suitably qualified and experienced.

Research the risks

As with all medical procedures, there is a degree of risk associated with cosmetic injections. Cosmetic injections into the wrong area of the face may result in serious consequences. While less severe side-effects such as skin redness, acne and swelling can occur, some of the more serious risks include:

- permanent blindness, which can occur when the filler is injected into any part of the facial artery and is not limited to procedures involving the eye area
- discolouration and death of skin tissue following dermal fillers being injected incorrectly; and
- the presence of counterfeit cosmetic injectables on the Australian market. There is no knowing what these are made of and should be avoided.

Your registered health practitioner is also responsible for providing aftercare. You should be provided with written instructions and advice on what follow-up will be provided and what to do if you experience unexpected side effects.

Research the products

Ask about the products that are going to be used in your procedure. As legislation prevents the advertising of product and brand names, you will need to ask for this information.

Substances used in cosmetic injections are regulated as Schedule 4 medicines, and can only be accessed with a valid prescription. This means products purchased without a prescription, such as those from overseas, may be counterfeit and dangerous.

The Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG) (<https://www.tga.gov.au/node/287250>) lists all of the products that can be legally supplied in Australia. Search the ARTG to ensure that the product used in your procedure is registered.

Avoid counterfeit products

Some clinics have been involved in the illegal importation and use of dangerous counterfeit products. Cheaper products imported from overseas can be difficult to identify and may pose health risks.

Do your research and ensure that your registered health practitioner is prescribing a product that is included on the ARTG (see above). If it sounds too good to be true, it often is!

Report any unexpected side effects

As with most medical procedures, there will be a range of side effects that are considered normal for cosmetic injections. These side effects should be explained to you and may include redness and swelling of the skin.

It is important for health practitioners to report unexpected side effects to the TGA. You can also report problems experienced as a result of a cosmetic injection directly to the TGA (<https://www.tga.gov.au/node/287456>).

Report illegal or questionable practices

The TGA oversees the regulation of therapeutic goods used in Australia, whether produced in Australia or elsewhere. The TGA implements a range of enforcement remedies to address illegal supply of unapproved therapeutic goods, including seizing and destroying illegal medicines and medical devices, and criminal or civil court proceedings, which can result in substantial fines or imprisonment.

You should report illegal or questionable practices (<https://www.tga.gov.au/node/282892>), including suspected counterfeit medicines and medical devices, to the TGA. Also advertising complaints (<https://compliance.health.gov.au/ac-report/>) can be made online.

Topics:

[Alert/Advisory \(<https://www.tga.gov.au/topics/alertadvisory>\)](https://www.tga.gov.au/topics/alertadvisory)