Real men now making up for lost time

From Botox to pedicures, the muscular beauty trend aims to maximize job and dating prospects

By Nicole Brochu
Staff Writer

They Botox and moisturize, dab their eyes with wrinkle cream and spend lunch hours on manicures and pedicures.

Today's men are getting a makeover, prettifying themselves with such gusto that they're driving big increases in national skin-care sales and flooding dermatologists' offices with record-high requests for wrinkle smoothers, laser treatments and derma fillers.

Welcome to the era of the "Brotox," so hip a term that it recently made Urban Dictionary's word of the day. Men of all ages, ethnicities and backgrounds are embracing the beauty industry — from noninvasive procedures to cosmetics and salon treatments — to maximize their prospects, in both the job market and the dating scene.

"These days, when you're in the business world, you have to look groomed," said new Brotox and pedicure convert William Jordan, 49, of Fort Lauderdale. "I don't have a friend who doesn't do this right now."

Few communities have a bird's-eye view on this muscular beauty trend quite like image-conscious South Florida, where Plantation dermatologist Dr. Richard Greene is seeing almost as many men for cosmetic procedures as women — unheard of just a few years ago. To keep up with demand, GBS The Beauty Store's six South Florida salons have had to truck in four times the number of men's grooming product lines in the past couple of years.

"Long gone are the days when taking care of yourself was equivalent to feminine," said Miami entrepreneur Darnell Henderson, whose multicultural all-men grooming line, Himistry, has seen online sales quadruple nationally since 2009. "It's all about getting the girl."

And the job, said Jordan.
"You start looking older, people start discarding you. You'd think they'd take you more seriously, but they don't," he said. "The job market has become slimmer, so guys in their late 40s want to compete with guys in their early 30s."

Today's growing assortment of products and procedures are giving men the tools they need like never before, allowing them to enhance their looks without losing their masculinity. Nowhere is this more true than in the world of cosmetic procedures, a market historically dominated by women.

"Out of every 100 patients, 98 of them were women," Greene said of his cosmetic procedure business just a few years ago. "A lot of men didn't want plastic surgery procedures."

Because men's skin is thicker, their lines deeper, "surgery looks different on men, and often, it doesn't look good at all," said Aventura dermatologist Dr. Mark Nestor. "Bruce Jenner is a good example of that."

That's changing, thanks to widely available nonsurgical options, including Botox, a similar smoother called Dysport, lower-face fillers like Restylane, tightening agents like Ulthera and even fat-reduction treatments like CoolSculpting and Zerona.

Men now make up about 40 percent of Greene's cosmetic procedure traffic, and Nestor estimated their numbers are "10 times what they were five or 10 years ago" in his office.

Wayne Goolsby, 36, an American Express project manager from Wilton Manors, said the procedures aren't just effective, they're becoming increasingly more acceptable for men.

"I definitely feel more people are getting it done and are willing to talk about it," said Goolsby, who has been getting Botox and Dysport injections from Greene for about three years, mostly to smooth lines in his forehead and straighten out arching eyebrows he felt looked too feminine. "It's more for prevention. I refuse to grow old gracefully."

It's just not dermatologist and plastic surgeon services they're seeking, either. Increasingly, they're heading to the nail salon and the department store beauty counter, too.

A February survey by the market research company NPD Group found that one in four men is using skin-care products such as facial cleansers, lip moisturizers, eye cream and anti-aging treatments. Business is so robust that the men's facial skin-care market enjoyed an 11 percent boost in sales last year over 2010 numbers, despite the still-struggling economy.

What fascinated the folks at NPD the most, according to vice president and senior global industry analyst Karen Grant, is that women are no longer driving such purchases. The survey found that 75 percent of the time, men are the ones doing the buying.
"Men of all ages want to show their vibrancy, to make sure their opportunities don't pass them by," Grant said.

All six GBS salons, from Miami to Boca Raton, are doing all they can to respond to, and build on, the demand. In one recent marketing effort, "GBS Loves the Man," every man who walked through the doorway of any GBS store got a complimentary gift bag of grooming goodies.

"It was very popular," GBS spokeswoman Dana Rhoden said. "We're getting all sorts of men from all walks of life paying attention to grooming. We're seeing men buying wrinkle remover for their eyes and, especially on Miracle Mile and in Fort Lauderdale, we're getting a lot of corporate men coming in on their lunch hour and after work for products, facials, manicures, pedicures."

The men's beauty movement is even the subject of a new tongue-in-cheek documentary, "Mansome," by director Morgan Spurlock of "Super Size Me" fame. (Released on May 18, the movie won't appear in Florida theaters.) Peppered with interviews with a wide slate of Hollywood stars, models and comedians — and punctuated by scenes of actors Will Arnett and Jason Bateman luxuriating in facial cream on a spa day — the film combs through the newly diverse definition of masculinity amid "men's idiosyncratic grooming habits" in 21st century America.

Laugh all you want, but Himistry's Henderson believes that, unlike the flash-in-the-pan metrosexual fad of the mid-2000s, this burgeoning trend promises to continue growing in the years ahead. His line, sold in Macy's stores since 2007, will start being offered at Target.com this week and in Target stores' shaving departments next spring.

Some of the big guns are also getting on board. Procter & Gamble demonstrated its confidence in the market when it bought two prestigious men's grooming brands at the height of the recession in 2009 — Zirh and the Art of Shaving, a high-end, men-focused retail chain with 36 locations, including four in South Florida.

"Guys really want to start taking care of themselves and looking better because they see that women like that," Henderson said. "What you're seeing is the growth of a larger movement."

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