

# Botox For Blokes?

*With promises it can boost your muscle power as well as your libido, HGH injections have been equated to male Botox – and Hollywood men are scrambling for vials of the wonder drug...*

**I**magine a drug that smoothes wrinkles, reduces body fat and improves muscle, libido, mood and energy. Sounds like anti-aging Kryptonite, right? What if we told you this stuff is on sale in UAE pharmacies?

Synthetically produced Human Growth Hormone (HGH) is used to replace the naturally produced hormones in the pituitary gland, which slow down as we leave our teens. The treatment is traditionally used to treat growth hormone deficiency, but in recent years HGH has hit the anti-aging industry.

Hyped as the love child of Viagra and Botox, pricey HGH injections are said to be commonplace among aging Hollywood actors. Brit singer Robbie Williams admitted he was tempted by the seductive promises of the anti-aging jabs when he moved to LA, home of the ageless celebrity.

In 2007, Sylvester Stallone was detained in Sydney Airport for possession of growth hormones, and Timbaland, Tyler Perry and Wyclef Jean were among a host of celebrities named in a 2008 probe into the shipment and illegal prescriptions of HGH. And with athletes praising HGH's healing powers (British rugby player Terry Newton recently tested positive for HGH, and Tiger Woods' former doctor Anthony Galea was charged with administering HGH to clients), the buzz has reached fever pitch.

But while in the UK and

US HGH injections are only available on prescription to those with a demonstrable hormone deficiency, in the UAE, vials of HGH can be bought over the counter – without a prescription.

"I am shocked to hear that Human Growth Hormone is available over the counter," says Dr Gary London, who specialises in hormone therapy and anti-aging medicine at his private practice in West Hollywood. "It is a powerful hormone with many physiological functions. It should never be used unless prescribed by a physician after determining by proper testing that the person has a deficiency. It should never be used for cosmetic purposes."

However, for less than Dhs2,000, you can buy 10mg of HGH at any UAE pharmacy to self-inject into your stomach.

## Liquid Youth?

Fitness fanatic Steve\*, 39, from Dubai, has been using HGH for two months. "After a couple of weeks, I could lift more at the gym, and my muscles felt harder," says Steve. "I also have increased energy, higher libido and my skin looks smoother."

Sounds too good to be true? That's because it is. "Claims that liken HGH to Viagra and Botox are completely bogus," says Dr Mary Lee Vance, an endocrinologist at the University of Virginia Health System in Charlottesville. "There is no scientific information to support that this is 'liquid youth'. Growth hormone has not been shown to

be beneficial in reversing aging."

What's more, new research has linked HGH to cancer, heart failure and diabetes. "All tissue in the body has receptors for GH, and GH can promote growth of an undiagnosed cancer," says Dr Vance.

## Fool's Gold

Tom Wolfe from PTX Performance Training in Dubai has witnessed the effects of self-prescribing for HGH therapy.

"Clients that have taken HGH have seen huge increases in size and strength initially. This has been followed by a rapid decrease in performance, six to eight weeks after taking a course. They then have seen a significant negative impact upon their libido, as well as drastic shrinkage in their muscle mass, depression, frustration, increased lethargy and decreased immune response."

Tom adds, "HGH will leave people with significant long term health/performance issues."

While Dr Vance warns, "With potential risks including acromegaly, hyperglycemia, diabetes, high blood pressure, development of colon polyps, and the potential for promoting growth of an undiagnosed cancer, I consider self-selecting for HGH therapy very dangerous." ■

