

Crow’s feet are stubborn. They crease when you smile, squint, or laugh, and over time those fine lines etch in place. The lateral eye area has thin skin and hyperactive orbicularis oculi muscles, so it is one of the earliest areas where expression lines become visible. Botox, a brand of botulinum toxin type A, softens the muscle contractions that bunch the skin into those radiating lines. The result, when dosed and placed well, looks like you slept better and spent a week on a gentle retreat. The question everyone asks first is simple: how many units do you need for crow’s feet?

The short answer is that most adults need a range, not a fixed number. The longer and more useful answer explains why dose ranges exist, how your anatomy and goals shape the plan, and what to expect from a safe botox treatment from consultation to touch up.

The typical dose range for crow’s feet

For classic crow’s feet treatment, experienced injectors often use 6 to 10 units of Botox per side for a subtle, natural look and 10 to 14 units per side for stronger lines or longer-lasting botox results. That puts the total between 12 and 28 units for both eyes. This mirrors the dosing you will see in many clinical references and aligns with everyday practice in a busy botox clinic.

Why the spread? The orbicularis oculi muscle circles the eye, but individuals use different fibers more or less depending on facial habits. One patient squints hard while driving, another smiles with the eyes for photos, and a third uses hats and sunglasses religiously. Those patterns show up on the skin and guide botox dosage. A smaller face with thin skin and delicate muscles can look overtreated at 12 units total, while a robust face with strong lateral pull may need 24 units to look refreshed.

A practical note from the chair: I often start a first timer at a conservative dose, observe the two-week result, and adjust with a small touch up if needed. Once we learn your muscle response, your ongoing botox maintenance becomes predictable.

Anatomy, movement, and mapping the injection points

Crow’s feet form as the lateral fibers of the orbicularis oculi pull the skin into radiating folds. If you think of the muscle as a circular shutter, the outer segments create those lines. Precise botulinum toxin injections go into these superficial fibers at 2 to 4 points per side, fanning along the natural line pattern. Placement matters as much as units. Too low or too posterior and you can affect the zygomaticus muscles that elevate the smile, which risks a flat, odd grin. Too close to the orbital rim and you may increase the risk of bruising or, less often, affect eyelid function.

A skilled, certified botox injector marks points while you smile, then disinfects, stabilizes the tissue, and injects small aliquots with a fine needle. The procedure takes only minutes, but the careful mapping is what protects your natural expression and gives a balanced softening. This is where professional botox injections earn their reputation. The hand on the syringe is more important than the brand on the vial.

What influences your crow’s feet dose

An experienced botox provider weighs several factors before finalizing a plan. Some are obvious, some you would not guess from a mirror check.

- Muscle strength and recruitment patterns. Stronger, thicker orbicularis fibers require more units to achieve the same degree of relaxation. People who squint a lot outdoors, drive long distances, or do frequent high-intensity training with facial strain sometimes fall in this category.
- Skin quality and photodamage. Sun exposure, smoking history, and intrinsic skin thickness change how lines look at rest. Lines etched into the dermis require more support from skincare and collagen stimulation alongside wrinkle botox, not just more units.
- Age and goals. A patient in their late 20s asking for preventive botox might do well at 4 to 6 units per side, spaced out over longer intervals. Someone in their 40s or 50s with fixed lines at rest may prefer 10 to 14 units per side for more smoothing. If you aim for natural looking botox that still allows a smile crinkle, your dose stays on the lower end.
- Sex and facial size. On average, men have larger facial muscles and often need 10 to 20 percent more botox dosage than women for the same effect. Smaller faces, regardless of sex, tend to need less.

- Previous treatment history. If you metabolize botulinum toxin quickly or have partial resistance from frequent treatments, your provider may adjust units or consider switching products.

You do not need to become an expert in facial anatomy to get a good outcome. You do need to communicate how you express, how you feel about movement, and what bugs you most in photos. That helps the injector calibrate the plan.

Units, brands, and why labels can confuse

Botox is a brand name, and units are specific to the brand. Dysport, Xeomin, Jeuveau, and Daxxify are other botulinum toxin type A products used in aesthetic medicine. Units are not interchangeable between brands. For crow's feet, the general feel of dosing carries over, but the numeric unit totals shift. This is one reason to be cautious when comparing botox deals among clinics. If one clinic quotes fewer units at a lower botox price, check whether the product is the same and whether the dose aligns with typical practice for that brand.

Within the Botox brand, units are consistent. A vial has a labeled number of units. Your injector reconstitutes the botulinum toxin with a measured amount of saline to create a specific concentration. This affects the volume per injection, which in turn affects spread in the tissue. Concentration is a tool: higher concentration gives tighter control for small areas like a lip flip, while a slightly more dilute mix can provide smooth coverage along the fan of crow's feet. None of this is guesswork. An experienced injector logs concentration and aliquots to replicate the results you liked.

Will it look obvious?

Well placed crow's feet botox should not announce itself. The eye area still moves. You still smile. The difference is that your skin does not scrunch into sharp radiating lines. From across a table, people see rested eyes and a softer outer gaze. Up close, you can expect faint crinkling to remain if the goal is subtle botox rather than total freeze.

The unnatural look most people worry about usually comes from two errors. The first is overdosing, which flattens the area and can tug on the smile vectors below. The second is chasing etched static lines solely with toxin instead of combining treatments. If the dermis has deep creases at rest, adding skin-directed therapies like a microneedling series, light fractional resurfacing, or a collagen stimulating routine will do more than throwing extra units at the problem.

How long does crow's feet botox last?

Botox longevity varies. Most people enjoy visible smoothing for 3 to 4 months in the crow's feet, sometimes stretching to 5 or 6 months with higher doses or quieter muscles. Athletes with fast metabolisms, people who speak or laugh frequently for work, and those with strong baseline muscles often see 2.5 to 3 months of peak result. A few variables you control can help longevity. Sunglasses in bright light reduce squinting. Good skincare improves the canvas, so less movement is needed to look smooth. Consistent repeat botox treatments, spaced appropriately, can lead to a compounding effect where lines never fully reestablish deep creases.

Expect onset over days, not hours. Most notice early softening at day 3 to 5, with full effect at two weeks. This two-week mark is the time your botox provider will evaluate whether a conservative plan needs a touch up.

What about baby botox or preventive botox?

Baby botox is a dosing philosophy, not a different product. It uses smaller aliquots at more sites, just enough to quiet movement without significant weakening. For crow's feet, baby botox might be 4 to 6 units per side, placed very precisely. It suits younger patients or those who value micro expressions for performance, on-camera work, or simply personal preference. The trade off is shorter botox effectiveness and a higher likelihood you will want a touch up at 8 to 10 weeks.



Preventive botox refers to starting treatment before lines etch at rest. In practice, that means softening crow’s feet in your late 20s or early 30s if your expression lines linger after smiling. The goal is to avoid repetitive folding of the skin long enough for collagen remodeling to keep the area smooth. Dose stays modest. The upside is a lighter, more affordable botox plan over the long run. The downside is committing to maintenance, since stopping completely after years of prevention will allow movement to return and lines to catch up to your age and habits.

The appointment, from consultation to post care

A good botox consultation feels like a short, focused interview. You explain what you notice in the mirror, when it bothers you, and how subtle or strong you want the change. The injector watches you animate and points out how the muscles create the lines you see. You will review medical history, medications, and allergies. Blood thinners, high dose fish oil, and certain supplements can raise the risk of bruising, so many clinics advise pausing nonessential agents a few days before, with your physician’s approval. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you should skip botulinum toxin injections. If you have a neuromuscular disorder, the injector will coordinate with your physician or may defer treatment.

During the botox procedure itself, makeup is removed near the lateral eye, the skin is cleaned, and small blebs are placed at mapped sites. Discomfort is brief and mild. You might feel one or two pinches more than the others, often at the most superficial points where the skin is thin. Immediately after, tiny bumps may look like mosquito bites. They settle within 10 to 20 minutes. Makeup can be reapplied gently if needed.

Post care is simple. Stay upright for a few hours, avoid rubbing the area, skip heavy exercise and saunas until the next day, and keep your hands off. You can ice for comfort. Bruising, if it occurs, is usually a small speck and can be covered with concealer. There is no real downtime. Most patients head back to work, errands, or social plans without anyone noticing.

Safety, side effects, and how to choose wisely

Botox cosmetic injections have an excellent safety record when performed by qualified clinicians using proper technique. The most common side effects are short lived: mild tenderness, transient redness, slight swelling, and small bruises. Headache can occur, generally mild, resolving within a day or two. In the crow's feet area, the main functional risk is inadvertently affecting smile dynamics if toxin diffuses to nearby muscles. That risk is minimized with correct depth, spacing, and dose.

Allergic reaction is rare. Ptosis, or a drooping eyelid, is uncommon with lateral eye injections compared to forehead botox or frown line botox, but it can happen if product migrates or if anatomy is unusual. If you experience asymmetry or heaviness, contact your injector. Most issues are modest and improve as the toxin effect recedes, but early assessment helps with planning and reassurance.

The biggest safety variable is the injector, not the product. Choose a trusted botox provider who does a high volume of facial botox, documents botox before and after results, and welcomes questions. In the consultation, listen for how they talk about anatomy, balance, and long term plans. A certified botox injector should never pressure you into more units than make sense for your goals. Beware of offers that seem too cheap to be real. Affordable botox is achievable with fair pricing and thoughtful dosing, but counterfeit or diluted products exist in the gray market. A top rated botox practice will be transparent about the brand used, vial sourcing, and your exact botox dosage.

Cost and value, beyond the per-unit price

Botox cost is usually quoted per unit or by the area. Per-unit pricing gives the most clarity because the number of units links directly to dose and durability. For crow's feet, at a typical range of 12 to 28 units total, you can estimate your botox price by multiplying the clinic's per-unit rate. Geographic differences are real. Urban centers with high rent and heavy demand run higher, while some suburban practices offer competitive botox specials, loyalty programs, or package pricing for combined areas like frown line botox and crow's feet together.

Value is not only the sticker price. If a conservative first session avoids overcorrection and preserves natural expression, you end up happier even if you return sooner for a calibrated botox touch up. A well planned botox appointment that includes aftercare guidance and a two-week review often reduces long term spend because your injector learns your response pattern and avoids waste.

What results to expect at two weeks and three months

At two weeks, judge the effect with a relaxed face, then with a full smile. Look for softening of the radiating lines, especially the upper and mid fans near the lateral canthus. The lower fan, toward the cheek, often retains a hint of crinkle for natural movement. If one side remains stronger, it may reflect asymmetry in baseline muscle pull. A micro adjustment of one to four units can even things out. Remember that chasing [Visit the website](#) every last line with toxin alone can change smile character. If the last little crease bothers you, consider complementary options like fractional laser, radiofrequency microneedling, or strategic filler support to thicken the dermis, not more toxin.

At three months, you will notice a gradual return of movement. Some people prefer to schedule repeat botox treatments at the first signs of return, keeping lines off balance. Others wait until movement is fully back and then reset. Either approach is valid. If you prefer subtle botox that never fully shuts down movement, you may alternate lighter and standard sessions through the year. If longevity is your priority, your injector may edge the dose slightly higher within safe, natural bounds.

Combining treatments for etched lines

Crow's feet etched at rest need more than muscle relaxation. Two paths help. First, skin quality work: a retinoid at night, daily sunscreen, and periodic procedures that stimulate collagen. Second, volume and support: in select cases, a minute amount of soft hyaluronic acid filler placed strategically in the lateral cheek or sub-dermal plane can improve how light reflects across the area, though this requires advanced hands due to the vascular anatomy.

Chemical peels, light fractional lasers, and energy-based skin tightening can be paired with botox facial treatment as part of a yearly plan. Timing matters. Most clinics stage procedures so that botox is done either two weeks before or after other interventions to reduce bruising and to allow clear assessment of each treatment's effect.

Frequent questions, answered with real numbers

How many units for my first session? If you have mild to moderate lines, expect 6 to 8 units per side. If your lines show strongly at rest, 10 to 12 units per side is common. If you favor movement and a whisper of crinkle, start at 4 to 6 units per side and accept a shorter duration.

Will more units always last longer? Up to a point, yes. Heavier dosing can extend botox longevity by several weeks, but returns diminish beyond a certain level and can affect expression. Most patients are happiest in the middle.

Can I just do one side? Asymmetry exists, and some injectors do place different units per side to balance natural differences. Treating only one side entirely is rarely advisable. Balanced movement looks more natural.

What if I have event photos next week? You will see some effect by day 4, but best results settle at two weeks. If timing is tight, plan for a gentle dose and rely on good concealer or camera angles rather than pushing for maximum change on a deadline.

Do I need a touch up? If at two weeks you still see strong lines with full smile, a micro touch up of 2 to 4 units per side can help. Most clinics either include a small touch up in the initial botox cosmetic treatment plan or charge per unit.

A note on the rest of the upper face

Crow's feet rarely exist in isolation. Frowning, forehead lift, and smiling all interplay. If your injector tightens the lateral eye area but leaves heavy pull in the glabella, you might notice a mismatch. This is why many people choose combined areas: frown line botox to soften the 11s, forehead botox to relax horizontal lines, and crow's feet in one session. Combining areas can create a harmonious effect with fewer units per area than treating each in isolation at separate times. It can also reduce botox downtime to a single appointment.

How to prepare and what to avoid

A few small steps make the day smoother and reduce side effects.

- Skip alcohol and high-dose fish oil the day before, and avoid nonessential anti-inflammatories if your doctor agrees, to reduce bruising risk.
- Arrive with clean skin around the eyes, no heavy concealer, and a note of any recent procedures.
- Bring photos that show what bothers you. Candid shots in bright light often reveal the pattern best.

With crow's feet in particular, sunglasses are your friend during recovery. Bright light encourages squinting before the toxin has fully set. Hydrating eye creams help comfort, though they do not change the toxin's effect. Keep expectations realistic in the first 24 hours, since nothing meaningful happens that fast with botulinum toxin.

Why the right injector matters more than the right number

You came for a number. You will leave with a plan. Numbers guide dosing, but they do not substitute for judgment. A certified botox injector who evaluates your expression in motion, tailors the botox injection therapy to your patterns, and can show you consistent botox before and after images will usually land the dose right the first time or fine tune it at the two-week mark. They will also know when to say that toxin alone will not erase static lines and suggest a better path for wrinkle reduction.

When you interview a provider, ask how they decide on units for crow's feet, whether they vary per side, how they handle touch ups, and what they do if a smile looks odd. A thoughtful answer reveals a lot about experience and ethics. Trusted botox practices put your face ahead of a rigid per-area template.

The bottom line, tailored to you

For crow's feet, plan on 12 to 28 units of Botox total for both eyes, with 6 to 14 units per side covering most needs. Start at the lower end if you favor movement, are new to botox, or have mild lines. Move toward the upper end if lines show at rest, your muscles are strong, or you want a longer interval between sessions. Give the result two weeks to peak, consider a small touch up if needed, and think in terms of a seasonal rhythm for repeat botox treatments to maintain a smooth, natural look.

Botox remains the most reliable, low-downtime way to soften crow's feet. Done well, it becomes a quiet habit rather than a headline. You will still look like you, only better rested, easier around the eyes, and less beholden to the squint.