

19 Sep 2006

14-year itch

Publication: Mid Day, Edition: Mumbai, Journalist: Vrushali Lad, Page No: A04, Location: Top-Right, Columns: 3, Height (cms): 23

14-year itch

Vrushali Lad

Vrushali.lad@mid-day. Com

KANAYALAL Shah just could not stop winking for 14 years till a Botox shot rescued him.

The 65-year-old had been suffering from a condition called Benign Essential Blephrospasmy (BEB), in which both or one eye blink uncontrollably. But unlike others, it was not vanity that forced the former shopkeeper to take the injection but necessity.

Now, however, he says, "My eye feels frozen after the Botox shot, but at least I can see."

The Sion resident has had no vision in his right eye since birth, and his left eye started giving him trouble in 1992. "At first, I noticed that my left eye would blink on its own. Over the years, the trouble increased so much that I was continuously blinking and could not see."

Punished for 14 years

The first time his eye gave him trouble, says Shah, "I was lying down but I felt the room spin. The next day I went to a doctor who thought it was vertigo."

Advised to get an MRI scan done in case he had a brain tumour, Shah stopped short of getting diagnosed completely. "I feel claustrophobic in the MRI machine. So for five years, I avoided getting an MRI scan and bore my ailment patiently."

As the twitching in his eye soon gave way to spasms, where the whole left side of his face would twitch, Shah began to wonder if he needed immediate treatment. "I went to many doctors and took all kinds of medicines, but nothing worked," he remembers. Since the continual blinking in one eye (which looked like he was winking constantly) was embarrassing and obstructed work, Kanayalal stopped going to work.

"I had to give up work because of embarrassment. I wasn't sure what I was looking at and I lost my confidence. I stopped going to my fruit shop iri Masjid Bundar in 1996 and preferred to remain at home," says Shah. His elder brother manages the shop now.

In 2000, Shah even took a Botox shot to grade down the twitching, but it didn't work out. "This year, I went to the Aditya Jyot Hospital in Wadala, and Dr Debraj Shome said Botox might work. I just didn't want to try it out, because each injection costs Rs 12,500 and it hadn't worked six years ago," he says.

Botox might help

Dr Shome says, "It took a lot of convincing before Shah agreed. But it seems to have worked, his eye is not twitching any more and he feels much better."

The shot is given in five places — two each at a distance of one-third of a millimetre from the eyelash line, and one at 10 mm from the eye. "He may have to take a shot every six months but if his condition does not improve, he might have to undergo surgery," says Dr Shome.