

PATIENT INFORMATION

Botulinum Toxin Treatment for Synkinesis (Abnormal Facial Nerve Connections Resulting in Involuntary Facial Movement)

This leaflet is for patients considering botulinum toxin injections for involuntary facial movements resulting from abnormal nerve connections (synkinesis).

What is the effect of botulinum toxin?

Botulinum toxin causes a temporary, partial or complete paralysis (weakness) of the muscle. Botulinum toxin reduces the effect and sensation of involuntary or abnormal muscle movement (including “twitching”) which may occur with facial nerve palsy.

Will botulinum toxin affect my general health?

The treatment is safe and there is no significant risk of developing botulism or food poisoning. This is because it acts locally at the site of injection with minimal to no absorption into the blood stream. Although we have never had a patient who experienced any general health problem with botulinum, all medication carries a small potential risk of a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).

When deciding whether or not to use botulinum toxin during pregnancy it is important to weigh up how important its use is to your health against the known or possible risks to you and your baby. If treatment is not absolutely necessary, it would usually be advisable to postpone treatment until you have given birth or weaned your child.

What should I expect when I attend the clinic?

First, your vision will be checked and a general health questionnaire will be given this is because there are some disorders which may not make you a good candidate for this treatment. You will then be examined by a specialist doctor. If the treatment is suitable for you, you will be asked to read and sign a consent form, and will usually receive the treatment on the same day. You should expect to be in the clinic for the whole morning or afternoon.

What is the treatment procedure?

The majority of patients undergo injections without any anaesthetic, as the injection pain is mild. However, you can ask your doctor to apply some skin anaesthetic cream to numb the area before the procedure if you like. You will then typically have small injections of low-dose botulinum toxin into the abnormally contracting muscle groups. This is usually very well tolerated and takes less than one minute.

What happens after the injection?

You should be able to go home after the injection. You may feel an ache in the injected area after the injection, for which you can take a painkiller as needed. You may develop a small bruise. It is recommended to avoid strenuous physical activity and facial massage for the next day or two to minimize the spread of the toxin to surrounding muscles.

When should I expect to see results from the treatment?

You will usually notice results about two days after the injection.

How long do results last?

This can vary, but results usually last between three and five months.

What are the possible side effects?

Nearly all side effects are temporary and recover with time. Side effects will vary depending on the sites being injected, but may include:

- Dry eye – this may need to be treated with artificial tear drops before the effect wears off.
- Drooping of the eyelid on the injected side.
- Drooping of the corner of the mouth.
- Temporary double vision – you should not drive while you have double vision. It is very important that you discuss this with the doctor before treatment if this is of particular concern to you. (see DVLA website: double vision and driving).
- Slight bruising around the injection site.
- Drooping of the face on the injected side. Very rarely, it is possible to get permanent weakness of the facial muscles after botulinum injections.

When do I return to the clinic?

We will make you an appointment to return to the clinic after two weeks to see if the treatment was effective and to consider further treatment if necessary. The dose for your next treatment might be increased or decreased based on the response from your clinician. Other important information If you have any reason to believe that you may be a carrier of hepatitis or HIV virus, please make sure that you tell the nurse or doctor who sees you in the clinic. The information is kept confidential but it is essential that we are informed. If you are not clear about any part of this treatment or have any questions, please ask the doctor to explain further. Please keep this leaflet for future reference.

Other important information

If you have any reason to believe that you may be a carrier of hepatitis or the HIV virus, please make sure that you tell the nurse or doctor who sees you in the clinic. The information is kept confidential, but it is essential that we are informed.

Botulinum toxin was originally introduced for the treatment of squint in 1979 (with our clinics successfully treating patients since 1982). The manufacturers have never applied for a drug product licence for synkinesis. We use it on a 'named patient' basis, and records are kept of all injections and patient details. This is one of many examples of a drug with a product licence for one condition being used safely and successfully for another condition.

If you are not clear about any part of this treatment or have any questions, please ask the doctor to explain further.

Please keep this leaflet for future reference.

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.