

Blepharospasm Treatment and Hemifacial Spasm

Botulinum Toxin Type A

Patient Information

This leaflet has been produced by Ophthalmic Nurse Practitioner and been reviewed by staff and patients throughout Secondary Care.

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The aim of this leaflet is to information about Blepharospasm Treatment

Botulinum Toxin for Blepharospasm and Hemifacial Spasm

Blepharospasm and hemifacial spasm are forms of dystonia. Dystonia is the name used to describe certain types of involuntary and abnormal movements and postures seen in a variety of neurological disorders.

Blepharospasm affects the muscles around the eyes causing uncontrollable blinking and closure of the eye lids.

Botulinum toxin is used to weaken the affected muscles around the eye. This toxin has been used relatively successfully in the treatment of blepharospasm and other types of dystonia.

What is Botulinum Toxin?

Botulinum Toxin Type A comes from a bacterium called Clostridium botulinum. It is known as a neurotoxin as it affects nerve tissue.

The toxin comes in a solution that also contains human albumin (a type of protein) and sodium chloride (salt).

If you have any questions about your treatment please contact your doctor/nurse who will answer them.

Further Information

More information about dystonia can be obtained from:

The Dystonia Society
46 – 47 Britton Street
LONDON
EC1M 5UJ
Telephone: 020 7490 5671

General information

Some medications may not be taken along with this treatment. Please check with your doctor / nurse.

Inform your doctor/nurse before injection of any of the following:

- If you are pregnant or are considering becoming pregnant.
- If you are breastfeeding.
- If you are allergic to any of the ingredients of this treatment (botulinum Toxin, human albumin, sodium chloride).
- If you are taking any antibiotics or muscle relaxants.
- If you have any bleeding disorders or are taking any medicines which affect blood clotting- Aspirin, Warfarin.
- If you suffer from any other muscle problems- general muscle weakness.

You can drink alcohol (in moderation!) whilst receiving this treatment.

How does it work?

At the junctions between nerves and muscles, a chemical messenger called acetylcholine is released from the nerve endings. This causes the muscles to contract.

Botulinum toxin prevents the release of this chemical messenger. This results in a weakened muscle and helps to reduce some of the abnormal muscle contractions.

The effects of Botulinum toxin wears off after a variable length of time (usually a small number of months). Therefore, the treatment has to be repeated.

How will the treatment be given?

Your doctor or nurse specialist will be specially trained in administering the toxin. They should discuss the treatment with you before your first injection.

The injection is usually given in the Out-Patient Department and will only take a few moments. The doctor/nurse will make up the injection and administer it to the appropriate muscles. For blepharospasm, the injection will be given under the skin at certain sites around each eye.

The treatment should start to take effect after 3 to 4 days and peak around 14 days. The treatment does eventually wear off and has to be repeated after approximately 3 to 4 months. Your doctor/nurse will decide when your next injection has to be given, and arrange an appointment before you leave the Clinic.

Are there any side-effects?

As with any medical treatments, there may be some unwanted side-effects after injections with the toxin. However, all side-effects are temporary and will wear off.

The most commonly reported side-effects are:

- Dry eyes
- Double vision
- Slight eye lid droop
- Dry mouth
- Flu like symptoms
- Bruising at the injection site
- Spread of weakness to the middle face or upper lips – causing a mouth droop

What if I miss an injection or stop the injections?

Nothing will happen if an injection is missed, expect perhaps that some of the spasm may return. If you stop getting the injections, the relaxing effect will eventually wear off and muscle movements will return to the way they were before the treatment.