

Botulinum Toxin Injections for the management of pain

The aim of this leaflet is to give you information about Botulinum Toxin injections and to answer some questions that you may have. Please note that different places may do things differently. Your doctor will be able to explain fully what to expect.

What is Botulinum Toxin?

Botulinum toxin is a purified protein that is derived from a bacterium called *Clostridium botulinum*. There are various different types of Botulinum toxins, each with their own specific action. The Pain Clinic uses two types of botulinum toxin type A – Allergan and Dysport. It is a safe and effective therapy and has been used for more than 10 years.

What is Botulinum Toxin used for?

The pain types, which are suitable for this treatment, include those where muscle spasm and tenderness are clearly definable, for example, in the regions of the head, neck and back. Botulinum toxin can also be used for pain arising from nerves or 'nerve pain'. The use of botulinum toxin for these kinds of pain is termed 'unlicensed'. This means that this is not the normal use for the medicine; however, in this case research has shown that this group of medicines can be effective in treating this condition.

What are the benefits of Botulinum Toxin injections?

By injecting the muscle(s) that are in spasm, muscle spasm is stopped or is greatly reduced. Consequently, the symptoms you have experienced, for example, pain is diminished. This treatment is not curative.

Is this the right treatment for me?

Please note that this is not a definitive cure but can help with managing your pain. Other treatment options will be discussed with you before deciding to have the injection. The decision on whether or not to have the injection is made together by your doctor and you. Your doctor will be able to give you up-to-date information about the chance of this treatment working for you and how it fits in with other care. Injection treatments do not always work and may not help your pain. If you are undecided about whether or not to have the injection, then more advice and information can be given. Please speak to your doctor for more information. If your health has changed, it is important to let your doctor know.

- ▶ If you have an infection in your body, your doctor may wait until the infection is cleared before giving the treatment.
 - ▶ If you are on certain antibiotics like Gentamycin, Neomycin or Streptomycin.
 - ▶ If you have been started on anticoagulant or antiplatelet medicines that “thin the blood” such as warfarin, heparin, apixaban, rivaroxaban or clopidogrel, extra preparation may be needed before you have the treatment.
 - ▶ If you suffer from diabetes.
 - ▶ If you have any allergies.
 - ▶ If you suffer from epilepsy.
 - ▶ If you have a disorder of neuromuscular transmission, including Myasthenia gravis, or Eaton Lambert syndrome.
- You must also tell the doctor if there is any chance that you could be pregnant.

What will happen to me during the treatment?

Before the injection, your doctor will discuss the procedure with you. Your doctor will either ask for your consent before the injection or ask you to confirm that you have already given consent and are still happy to have the injection. The treatment will take place in a dedicated area with a trained person. Not all doctors do these injections in exactly the same way but this is what usually happens:

- ▶ A medical professional will get you ready for the procedure. Your blood pressure and pulse rate may be checked.
- ▶ A small needle (cannula) may be placed in the back of your hand.
- ▶ You will be carefully positioned and the skin around the injection sites will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution or spray; this can feel very cold.
- ▶ The doctor will inject the Botulinum Toxin into the muscles causing you pain. When the injections are made, you may feel pressure, tightness or a pushing sensation. If it is uncomfortable, do let the doctor know.

What will happen to me after the injection?

After the injection, you will be taken to a recovery or ward area where nursing staff will check on you. Your blood pressure and pulse may be checked. You will be given more advice when you are ready to go home.

When will I be able to go home from hospital after my injection?

You will usually be able to go home within a few hours after the injection and in some cases much sooner, depending on how long your doctor or nurse want you to stay. Please make sure that you have someone to collect you after the procedure. It is unsafe for you to drive home straight after the procedure. If you do so your motor insurance will be invalid.

What can I do after my procedure?

Ideally, you should arrange for someone to stay with you for 24 hours but, if you cannot, you should at least have access to a telephone. You should not drive, operate machinery, sign legal documents, provide childcare without help or drink alcohol until fit to do so. If you are not sure, please ask your doctor for more advice.

When can I return to work after the procedure?

This will be different for different people and may depend on the type of work you do. It is difficult to give general advice and so you should discuss this with your doctor.

Will I experience any side-effects?

As with any procedure, there may be side effects. However, these are usually minor and there is little risk of serious harm.

Side-effects may include:

- ▶ Mild local tenderness and/or bruising at the site of the injection, that usually gets better over the first few days.
- ▶ You may experience a temporary increase in muscle spasms. There is a small possibility of temporary weakness in the treated muscles. If you have had these injections in the facial muscles, this could result in temporary facial asymmetry.
- ▶ 1% of patients experience an increase in pain for approximately a month; this always improves and does not affect the response of the Botulinum Toxin.
- ▶ Around 5% of an injected dose will spread from the local site of injection through the body, causing some patients (12%) to feel washed out or “fluey” for a week or two.
- ▶ Infection. This is rare. You should seek medical help if there is local warmth or redness over where you had the injection with tenderness. Or if you feel hot and unwell. This may need antibiotic treatment.
- ▶ Rarely, swallowing difficulties or problems with voice production have been reported if the toxin is injected near the muscles controlling voice or swallowing, or if larger doses are used. Please seek immediate medical attention if swallowing, speech or breathing difficulties arise.
- ▶ Nerve injury is very rare.



People vary in how they interpret words and numbers.
This scale is provided to help.



What can I expect in the days afterwards?

You may feel some soreness or aching at the injection site. Please keep the area of the injections dry for 24 hours following the procedure. Do not worry if your pain feels worse for a few days as this sometimes happens. Take your regular pain killers and medications as normal and this should get better. Try to keep on the move about the house while avoiding anything too difficult.

What should I do in the weeks after the injections?

As your pain decreases, you should try to gently increase your exercise. It is best to increase your activities slowly. Try not to do too much as you may have more pain the next day. Your doctor can provide more specific advice.

What follow-up will be arranged?

A letter will usually be sent to your GP and your doctor will tell you what to do after the procedure. You may be asked to make a call to the pain department, be given a form to fill in, or given a telephone review or other appointment.

Is there anything else I need to think about before the procedure?

- ▶ Please bring your glasses if you need them for reading.
- ▶ Bring any other devices you may need, such as hearing aids, mobility aids etc.
- ▶ Always bring a list of all current medication.
- ▶ Continue to take your medication as usual on the treatment day, unless advised otherwise.
- ▶ It is recommended that steroid injections are avoided 2 weeks on either side of vaccination.

Finally...

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's or health care team's advice. If you need more information or have any questions or concerns, please speak to your GP or contact your Pain Clinic.

After your procedure, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact your GP/Minor Injuries Unit/Accident & Emergency

or

Contact the Chronic Pain Service at **01495-768699** or **01495-765701** (09:00 to 16:00 Monday to Friday)

Adapted from Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM) Patient Information Leaflet for Trigger Point Injections

**This document is available in Welsh/
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