

Botulinum Toxin treatment for Strabismus (Squint)

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact: Orthoptic department, telephone
01904 726750

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What is botulinum toxin?

Botulinum Toxin (Botox) is a drug that temporarily paralyses (weakens) muscles by blocking the nerve signals to the muscle.

The drug has been used for many years to treat eye conditions and is safe. There is no risk of botulism or food poisoning. Allergic reactions are rare.

What is botulinum toxin used for?

The drug can temporarily weaken an eye muscle to change the position of an eye. This can be useful to:

- Assess if a patient is likely to get double vision when their eye is in a new position – this can be useful for patients with longstanding squints who are considering surgery.
- Give the doctor additional information about a squint and to decide if surgery would be useful.
- Improve double vision caused by a squint.
- As an alternative to squint surgery in selected cases.

Some patients have repeated Botox injections to treat their squint or double vision.

How long do the effects last?

The effects of the Botox usually begin two to three days after the injection and will be at their greatest after one to two weeks.

The effects of drug usually last from a few weeks to a few months but this does vary between patients.

Any effects of botulinum toxin are temporary and will likely wear off.

Some patients notice no effect from the drug, and they may need another injection or an alternative treatment.

Occasionally, some patients find longer lasting benefit from their Botox injection even after the drug has worn off – this is because the eye muscles can re-gain control after the drug has worn off.

What are the possible side effects?

Some patients feel a slight ache around the eye and eye lid immediately after the injection. Occasionally there may be some temporary swelling or bruising. Other possible side effects:

- **Droopy eye lid (Ptosis)** – this is experienced if the drug leaks into the eyelid muscle. This is temporary and will wear off in the next few weeks. This happens in approximately one in 10 cases.
- **Unintentional effect on other muscles** –the drug leaks into another muscle and may temporarily weaken the muscle. This can sometimes cause a vertical squint and happens in approximately one in 10 cases.
- **Reversal of the squint** – for example an in-turning eye becomes out-turning and vice versa. This is often a sign the drug has worked well and as the drug wears off your eye will appear straighter before returning to its original position.
- **Increase in double vision** - if this is troublesome you are advised to wear a patch. Do not drive with double vision. Any increase in double vision is likely to be temporary.
- **Eye infection/bleeding** – this can lead to damage to the eye or vision but is extremely rare.
- **Perforation of the globe** – a very rare side effect causing damage to the eye.

What happens at my appointment?

Botox injections are usually performed whilst you are awake. You will be given some local anaesthetic eye drops to numb the surface of your eye. These drops are very effective, but you may still feel some discomfort. It should not be painful.

You will have some wires on sticky pads placed on your forehead. These wires are attached to an EMG (Electromyographic) machine to improve accuracy of the injection. You will be asked to lie still and move your eyes from side to side. You will hear a noise from the machine as the muscle is injected – this will only take 30 seconds.

What happens after the Botox injection?

You can go home immediately after your appointment. Your eye will feel numb for a few hours after the procedure. You will be sent an appointment to come back to the eye clinic for a check up on your eye position after a few weeks. If you have any questions or concerns, please call us on 01904 726750

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact: Lucy Ridgeon, Specialist Orthoptist, Ophthalmology, The York Hospital, telephone 01904 6751 or email Lucy.Ridgeon@nhs.net

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

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