

Botulinum Injections

In Cerebral Palsy and Other Conditions With Stiff (Spastic/ Dystonic) Muscles

Patient Information

Child Health Department

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What is it?

Botulinum Toxin type A is an injection drug (Botox, Dysport) which can be used to treat spasticity and dystonia in Cerebral Palsy. It acts by preventing the transmission of signals between a nerve and its target muscle reducing the excessive stiffness of spastic muscles so that the developing muscle can grow more normally. Increasing the length of the spastic muscles reduces the risk of contractures and thus the need for surgery. It may also lead to better limb function. It is only licensed for the use in spastic calf muscles but is widely used for other spastic muscles in children sometimes in higher total doses than outlined in the Summary of Product Characteristics.

What are the benefits?

Reduces stiffness in muscles and can allow for better movement in the limb.

Are there alternatives?

Continue with physiotherapy. Surgery too can be considered.

How does it work?

Botulinum toxin is injected from a syringe directly into a muscle, causing it to lose its spasticity (tightness/stiffness) over the course of a few days. Only a proportion of the muscle fibres are involved, so that usually the muscle does not go completely weak; usually the maximal effect lasts around 3 months and wears off completely by 6 months but it varies from child to child. Botulinum injection therefore relaxes the muscles and enables greater stretching to take place during normal activity and during physiotherapy. It also allows the muscle to grow better. However, the injection itself cannot relax the muscle on its own, therefore it is extremely important that physical management is continued as directed by your physiotherapist.

What is involved?

The nurse will apply some local anaesthetic cream to the areas where the injections are to be made and give your child a sedation by mouth. This means that when the doctor gives the injection your child is lightly relaxed and should not feel the needle going through the skin, although will feel it a little in the muscle. Usually one to four injections are required per muscle group.

Botulinum toxin stays mainly in the muscle when injected, where some bruising/tenderness may be noted. A small amount may escape in to the blood circulation, but usually there are no effects at all. Some patients have noted flu like symptoms, lethargy, and weakness around 4 days after the injection, ear infections, rash and urinary incontinence. We would ask you to note any specific symptoms and report them to Dr Velmurugan. Please contact his secretary on Tel: 01942 822549 and leave a message and we will contact you back. Very rarely, swallowing, speech or respiratory problems may occur, in which case you would need to seek immediate medical care.

What happens after the injection?

When the effect of the sedation has worn off, your child can go home. You must remember to carry out his/her physical management on a regular basis as directed by your physiotherapist. If the injection is found to be helpful further appointments for re-injections can be arranged depending upon your child's needs.

What are the risks?

Botulinum stops muscle from working. This is a good thing for the muscles that it is intended for, but if it were to go in to muscles that were not intended, then they too would stop working. Depending on the muscle, that can cause problems.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

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Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Personal Information

For details on how we collect, use and store the information we hold about you, please take a look at our “how we use your personal information” leaflet which can be found on the Trust website: www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient_information/Leaflets/default.aspx

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille and other languages upon request. For more information call 01942 773105.

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