

Information for patients and carers

Botulinum Injections for Hemifacial Spasm and Blepharospasm



What is Blepharospasm?

Blepharospasm causes the muscles around your eyes to spasm involuntarily. It is thought to happen because of loss of control of the normal blink reflex. Frequent blinking and uncontrollable eye closure are common characteristics of blepharospasm. In the most severe cases, a person may not be able to open their eyes for several minutes.

Blepharospasm can be worsened by stress or bright lights. The pattern of the spasm may change throughout the day. For example, you might have few or no symptoms when you wake up in the morning, but they could start to appear or get worse when you are tired or stressed.

What is Hemifacial spasm?

Hemifacial spasm also causes spasms around the eye but only affects one side and usually involves other muscles (such as cheek or mouth) on the same side of the face. Hemifacial spasm can be caused by a blood vessel touching the facial nerve. Another cause is abnormal rewiring of the facial nerve after a facial nerve injury. Sometimes there is no known cause.

Treatment using Botulinum Toxin

Botulinum Toxin is a naturally occurring substance, released by a specific type of bacteria. In large amounts, it can be poisonous, however, weak doses can be used safely as a muscle relaxant to treat many conditions including blepharospasm and hemifacial spasm. There are numerous brands of botulinum toxin. We currently use Botox as our first line product, but we also use Dysport and Xeomin.

To treat spasms, small amounts of botulinum toxin are injected into the affected muscles around the eyes and in the face. This blocks chemical signals in the nerves, preventing the muscle from contracting.

Usually, 3 to 6 small injections are given at different sites. The injections might be a little painful, but most people tolerate the discomfort easily.

After the Injections

It takes about 3 to 5 days before the injections take effect, and up to 2 weeks for the full effect to be seen. You should then notice a reduction in the amount of spasm you have in the treated eyes.

The effects of botulinum toxin generally last for up to 3 months then start to wear off. If you want to maintain the effect, you will need regular follow up injections.

Risks

Potential side effects of botulinum toxin relate to it working too well or leaking into other muscles around the eye. All side effects are temporary and will wear off as the botulinum toxin wears off.

Side effects can include:

- Poor closure of the eye, resulting in dry eye, discomfort or blurry vision
- A droopy upper lid
- Double vision
- Lower eyelid ectropion (out turning lid)
- Pain, swelling or bruising at the injection site
- Loss of facial expression

Other uses of botulinum toxin injections around the eye

- To deliberately induce a droopy lid to protect the cornea in cases of facial palsy.
- Correcting squints

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact:
Lancashire Eye Centre Oculoplastic secretaries on:
01257 245058 or **01772 521392**.

If you have an urgent, sight-threatening problem contact our nurse triage line between 9am-5pm on Monday-Friday on: **01257 245346**

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware

www.bopss.co.uk

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Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

patientexperienceandinvolve@LTHTR.nhs.uk

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