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Information for patients and carers

Botulinum Toxin A

Injections in the head and neck region

What is botulinum toxin?

Botulinum toxin (Type A) is a purified protein produced by the Clostridium botulinum bacterium. It works by blocking nerve signals to muscles and glands. Botox™ and Xeomin™ are among several brands available as prescription-only medication in the UK.

How is it given?

Botulinum toxin A is injected through the skin to target specific facial muscles or glands using an extremely fine, sterile needle. The exact location and dosage depend on the condition being treated.

Why am I being offered botulinum toxin A?

Botulinum toxin A may be effective for a number of indications:

Reduced muscle activity: Can reduce overactivity of facial muscles, such as in myofascial pain syndrome, spasm, dystonia and dyskinesia.

Improved facial symmetry: May help balance facial muscle movement in conditions like facial palsy.

Pain relief: May help manage pain from clenching, grinding and migraines.

Reduction in drooling and unwanted sweating: Can reduce excessive salivation in conditions like sialorrhea and unwanted sweating such as in Frey's Syndrome.

When will I notice a difference?

The effects of botulinum toxin typically begin within 4-7 days after injection but may take up to 14 days for full results. Individual responses vary. Though effective in many cases, botulinum toxin A will not prove effective for every patient. In this situation, treatment will be discontinued, and other options can be considered.

How often will I need injections?

The effects are temporary, generally lasting 3-6 months. To maintain the benefits, repeat treatments may be advised, depending on your response to the toxin.

What should I consider before agreeing to treatment?

There are several factors to consider and discuss with your clinician, such as:

Antibiotics
If you are on antibiotics or feeling unwell, treatment may be postponed as illness or infection may reduce the effectiveness of the injections. Infection at the planned site of injection is also a contraindication.

Anticoagulants
Patients taking blood-thinning medications (e.g. Warfarin) may still receive treatment, but your INR (International Normalised Ratio) should be below 3 and tested within 48 hours of the procedure. In some cases, injections may be contraindicated. There may be increased bruising.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding
Botulinum toxin is not recommended during pregnancy or breastfeeding due to insufficient evidence of safety.

Religion
You should know that some botulinum toxin brands are produced using treated human blood components (human serum albumin). There are alternative formulations if this matters to you.

Doses
The dosage and injection sites are personalised according to your specific needs and may be adjusted in subsequent treatments based on your symptoms and response.

What side effects should I be aware of?

Botulinum toxin A injections are generally safe, but like all treatments, they carry some risk of side effects, including:

Flu-like symptoms such as headache, fever, or tiredness

Bruising, swelling, a rash or pain at the injection site

Facial muscle weakness if the toxin migrates to neighbouring muscles, resulting in asymmetry or drooping, such as weakness of the lower lip when smiling

Dry mouth or **difficulty swallowing** (rare)

Reduced effectiveness over time (rare)

Temporary widespread muscle weakness (very rare)

Severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) is extremely rare but please seek immediate medical attention if you experience difficulty breathing or swelling by calling 999.

Most side effects are temporary and resolve on their own. There is no reversal agent.

You may be asked to sign a consent form prior to undergoing this treatment, should you wish to proceed. This may include signing each time further botulinum toxin A injections are planned.

Please note that you have the right to refuse this treatment and withdraw consent at any moment. You have the right to ask for alternative treatment options and to discuss their risks and benefits.

What should I do after treatment with botulinum toxin A?

To maximise the benefits of your botulinum toxin treatment and minimise the risk of side effects, please follow these aftercare instructions:

Avoid strenuous activities for at least 24 hours following treatment. This helps reduce the risk of bruising and swelling.

Do not rub or massage the treated areas for 24 hours up to 72 hours after treatment, as this can cause the toxin to spread to unintended areas.

Keep your head elevated and avoid lying down for at least 4 hours after treatment.

Avoid alcohol and heat (e.g. saunas, hot baths) for 24 hours.

Who should I contact?

Should you require further information, or you have concerns you wish to discuss following treatment, please call the OMFS Department: **01772 523593**.

For out-of-hours advice, you can contact Ward 3 via the hospital switchboard **01772 716565**.

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.gov.uk/drug-safety-update/botulinum-toxin-products-rare-but-serious-risks

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www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

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patientexperienceandinvolvem@LTHTR.nhs.uk

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