Pain Service

Botulinum toxin injections

What is Botulinum Toxin?
Botulinum Toxin is a purified protein that is derived from the infective agent called Clostridium Botulinum. There are various different types of Botulinum Toxins each with their own specific action. The pain clinic uses Botulinum Toxin Type A, Allergan and Dysport (Ipsen). It is a safe and effective therapy and has been used for more than ten years.

What is Botulinum Toxin used for?
You may have heard of ‘Botox’ being used to treat frown lines and wrinkles. This is one of the brand names for Botulinum Toxin A. It has also been used to treat lazy eye, cross eyes and uncontrolled blinking.

In this clinic we use Botulinum Toxin A to treat chronic pain. We use it for pain where muscle spasm and tenderness can be clearly defined. The toxin is injected into the muscles that are too tight in order to relax them.

How does Botulinum Toxin work?
Botulinum Toxin works by a process which results in blocking the nerve signals that cause muscle contraction. The muscle then relaxes resulting in reduced muscle spasm. This effect usually occurs around two to four weeks after the injection.

How long do the effects of the treatment last?
Usually, the muscle relaxation produced by the injection lasts from three to six months. The effects of the Botulinum Toxin eventually ‘wears off’. When this happens, the nerves are once again able to send signals for the muscle to contract. For this reason, the effects of the injection are not permanent. Botulinum Toxin injections cannot be repeated indefinitely and your consultant will guide you on how many times such injections may be offered.
What is the procedure for the injection?

Before the procedure

- You will have treatment as an outpatient at the Ely Day Surgery Unit.
- It is essential that after the procedure you arrange for an adult friend or relative to collect you by car or taxi. You will not be able to use the bus or train to travel home.
- You will be asked to undress and put on a theatre gown. A doctor will then discuss the procedure with you and ask you to sign a consent form.

The procedure

This information leaflet is to be read in conjunction with the leaflet titled ‘Advice to be read before your Pain Clinic injection treatment’.

- Your doctor will determine exactly which muscles require injecting and ask you to position yourself in order to access these muscles easily.
- Once you are in the correct position the doctor will clean the area of muscle with an antiseptic solution which can feel very cold.
- Your doctor will then introduce a needle into the target muscle and inject the Botulinum Toxin solution.

Following the procedure

- After the procedure you will taken to the recovery area.
- The nursing staff will observe you and you may rest for about thirty minutes.
- When sitting up you will be offered refreshment.
- You will then be free to go home.

Please ensure that you have arranged for someone to drive you home after this procedure. Failure to do so will result in your procedure being cancelled.

What should I expect afterwards?

By injecting the muscles with Botulinum Toxin A we are aiming to stop or greatly reduce the amount these muscles spasm. The aim of this is to reduce the amount of pain you experience. This is not a curative treatment, Botulinum Toxin injections cannot be repeated indefinitely and your consultant will guide you on how many times such injections may be offered.

What are the side effects of the treatment?

- After the injection, it is normal to feel a little sore in the injected muscle and around the injection site.
• Around 12% of patients experience mild flu like symptoms, reporting feeling ‘washed out’ occurring in the first week or two after treatment.
• 1% of patients experience an increase in pain for approximately one month post treatment. This is a ‘pain flare’ and will improve with time. It does not affect the response to the toxin treatment.
• Very rarely, swallowing difficulties or problems with voice production have been reported when the toxin had been injected near the muscles used for these functions.

Who should not be given the toxin?
Botulinum Toxin should not be given to people in pregnancy or to anyone with disorders of neuromuscular transmission including Myasthenia Gravis or Eaton Lambert syndrome. Caution is advised in those patients diagnosed and significantly affected by Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME), although there is no documented evidence that it affects the condition.

Additional Information
The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor’s advice. If you require more information or have any questions please contact your GP or the Pain Clinic Monday to Friday 13.30- 16.30.

Telephone number: 01223 217796

We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.
For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:
If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.
Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

Document history
Authors                  Pain Service
Department               Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ www.cuh.org.uk
Contact number           02113 217796
Publish/Review date      June 2016/June 2019
File name                PIN2216_botulinum_toxin_injections_v3.doc
Version number/Ref       4/PIN2216