

Botulinum toxin for the treatment of squint Orthoptics

Information for patients and carers

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Why am I having a botulinum toxin injection?

Botulinum toxin injections are used to treat certain types of squint (strabismus). A squint occurs when the eyes are not pointing in the same direction.

The injection works by temporarily weakening one of the eye muscles. This can help:

- improve the alignment of the eyes
- reduce or improve double vision
- help the eyes work together more effectively
- assess how you may respond to future squint surgery
- improve the appearance of the eye position

The aim of treatment will vary from person to person. Your consultant will discuss the reason for treatment and the expected benefits in your individual case.

What does botulinum toxin do?

- Botulinum toxin (Botox) temporarily weakens the eye muscle into which it is injected.
- The effects usually begin within **3 to 5 days** and are strongest after about **2 weeks**. This is used to correct a squint.
- The effect is temporary and can last from a few weeks to several months. During this time, you may notice your eye position changing. Sometimes the eye may briefly turn in the opposite direction before gradually becoming straighter as the treatment wears off.

Will botulinum toxin affect my general health?

- Botulinum toxin is a safe treatment when used correctly.
- As with any medicine, there is a very small risk of a serious allergic reaction. This is called **anaphylaxis**. This is extremely rare.
- If you have any concerns about allergies or previous reactions to medicines, please discuss them with your consultant before treatment.

Who may not be suitable for botulinum toxin injections?

Botulinum toxin injections may not be suitable for:

- people with a severe fear of needles
- some people with an egg allergy
- patients who may find it difficult to follow instructions during the procedure
- pregnant women

Your consultant will discuss whether this treatment is suitable for you.

What happens on the day of the injection?

1. You will check in at the Ophthalmology Reception in Daresbury Wing, Warrington Hospital.
2. You will be shown to the treatment area.
3. In the treatment room, you will lie on a bed.
4. The consultant and / or orthoptist will complete a safety check and confirm your consent for the procedure.
5. The eye and muscle to be treated will be marked.
6. Anaesthetic eye drops will be put into your eye to numb the area. These help prevent pain, although you may still feel some pressure during the injection.
7. Electrodes will be placed around your eye after the skin has been cleaned with a gel.
8. During the procedure, you will be asked to keep your head still and move only your eyes when instructed.
9. When the needle is placed into the muscle, you will hear a buzzing sound similar to radio static.
10. The needle usually stays in place for **20 to 30 seconds** before being removed.

After the injection

- Avoid heavy lifting for **4 hours**.
- Avoid excessive bending over for **4 hours**.
- Avoid exercise for **24 hours**.

What are the possible side effects?

Most side effects are temporary and improve without treatment.

Common side effects

Change in eye position

- The eye may temporarily turn in a different direction before settling.

Redness or bruising

- You may develop bruising around the eye or redness on the white part of the eye.
- There may occasionally be a small amount of bleeding at the injection site.

Drooping eyelid

- About 1 in 5 patients experience a temporary drooping eyelid.
- This usually improves within a few weeks.

Double vision

- Some patients develop temporary double vision.
- This can be side-by-side or one image above the other.
- You should not drive while you have double vision.

Rare side effects

Long-lasting muscle weakness

- Very rarely, the injected muscle may remain weak for longer than expected.

Damage to the eye

- Very rarely, the needle can damage the eye during the injection.
- This could affect vision and, in extremely rare cases, may lead to permanent sight loss.

How often will I need injections?

This varies from person to person.

The number of injections you need will depend on:

- the type of squint you have
- how well the treatment works
- the aim of your treatment

When should I seek urgent help?

Seek urgent help if you experience:

- sudden loss of vision
- severe eye pain
- increasing redness or swelling
- significant bleeding from the eye
- new symptoms that are rapidly getting worse

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

- **Orthoptic Department**
01925 662772
- **Ms Razzouk's Secretary**
01925 662403
- **Ophthalmology Waiting List Team**
01925 662979