

Botulinum toxin for squints

This leaflet explains more about the use of Botulinum toxin for squints. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact 020 7188 4299 and leave a message on our answer phone.

What is Botulinum toxin?

Botulinum toxin (BTXA) is a chemical derived from bacteria (*Clostridium Botulinum*). It is injected into the muscles around the eye to weaken them and change the eye position. BTXA has been used for squints for since 1979.

Why should I have Botulinum toxin (BTXA)?

BTXA injection is useful in helping us to plan the surgical procedure that would give the best possible outcome for your eyes. In some cases it is recommended as an alternative to squint surgery. The great advantage of BTXA is that it wears off, so if the treatment does give you troublesome double vision, it will **not be permanent**.

BTXA is most commonly used as a temporary treatment, but in some cases it can be used repeatedly instead of squint surgery if a formal operation on the muscles would be difficult. This might include patients who have had previous surgery, patients with very small squints, or patients whose condition may spontaneously change so permanent surgery would not be the best treatment at this stage.

Sometimes we use BTXA in patients who cannot undergo a general anaesthetic but would still like their squint to be corrected.

What are the risks to my general health?

The treatment is safe and there is no risk of developing botulism poisoning. There is a small risk of an allergic reaction. Over 10,000 patients throughout the UK have been treated with no long-term side effects.

Are there any side effects?

Like any treatment, BTXA can have side effects. These side effects are almost always temporary and improve with time. The most common side effect after an injection of BTXA is a droopy eyelid. This occurs in about one in twenty injections. If this happens the lid usually lifts within two weeks. Occasionally there may be bruising to the white of the eye. There is an extremely rare possibility of the needle piercing the eye. The risk of this is no greater than one in 10,000 injections.

What happens during the procedure?

The surface of the eye is gradually numbed with a series of drops instilled by the Orthoptist (a health professional trained in visual development and eye movement). After the eye is numb, electrical leads will be connected to the forehead, which enable the Ophthalmologist (a doctor trained in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of diseases of the eye and visual system) to locate the correct position for the needle to be in for the injection to be given (there will be a hissing sound rather like a radio out of tune during the procedure). When you receive the injection, your eyelids will be held open gently by the Ophthalmologist, and you will be asked to look in certain directions. The needle is kept in position for thirty seconds to prevent BTXA from leaking, and then it is removed. You can blink normally during this procedure.

After the procedure, some antibiotic ointment is applied to the eye, and then you are free to go. We recommend you wear a pair of glasses/sunglasses after the appointment for about an hour as the eye will still be numb. We suggest that you ask someone to accompany you home when you leave hospital.

Will I feel any pain?

Some patients are aware of a slight ache or dragging sensation during the procedure.

What happens after the procedure?

You will usually notice no change for the first day or two. After approx 3-5 days the eye should start to move into a different position. As the BTXA wears off, the eye will start to turn back towards the middle. It is useful if you can take photos of your eye position and write down your symptoms during this time, in order for us to determine the best eye position for you. We normally arrange see you two weeks after the first injection.

My eye has gone the other way and now I get double vision, is this normal?

Yes, this is an expected outcome of a BTXA injection, but it is not permanent. If this affects your work and normal activity, we can offer you some glasses with a film covering one lens. You should **not** drive if you have double vision (www.gov.uk/diplopia-and-driving).

How long does it take to wear off?

The BTXA takes about three months to wear off completely. We do not usually undertake any surgery until it has completely worn off. It may be six months before further treatment/surgery if appropriate.

Medicine - Taking an unlicensed medicine

The majority of medicines used in the UK hold a product licence, granted by a government organisation. The product licence covers specific conditions in which medicine can be used to treat people. BTXA has never been covered by this licence although it has been used in this way since 1979. The prescribing doctor has judged that BTXA should be used in this way, it has been decided that it is the most suitable treatment for the patient's needs and is in their best interest. Records of all injections are kept in the patient's notes. The Orthoptist and Ophthalmologist are happy to answer any questions on this.

The leaflet, **Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients**, has more information about unlicensed medicines. If you would like a copy, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Alternatively you can call the pharmacy medicines helpline – contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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