Dysport® (botulinum toxin) injection for adult spasticity

This leaflet explains more about having a Dysport® injection for the treatment of spasticity. It explains the benefits, risks and alternatives of the injection as well as what to expect when you come to hospital. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the doctor or physiotherapist caring for you.

What is a Dysport® injection?
Dysport® contains botulinum toxin which works by stopping muscles contracting. It is used to treat muscle spasms in different areas of the body. It is given as an injection into the affected muscle(s) to produce temporary weakness and relaxation.

The effects of the Dysport® injection are temporary and will last 3-4 months, and then they will gradually wear off.

Why should you have a Dysport® injection?
It has been shown to be a well-tolerated and effective treatment for people with spasticity in a specific muscle or group of muscles. Spasticity is an abnormal increase in the tone of your muscles and is common after an injury to the brain or spinal cord.

Dysport® is often used as well as physiotherapy or occupational therapy for the management of spasticity. Your physiotherapist, occupational therapist or other healthcare professional will discuss the goals of your treatment with you.

Dysport® is licensed for treatment of spasticity affecting the arm muscles. However, it is not licensed for treatment of spasticity affecting other muscles or groups of muscles, such as the leg muscles. Our leaflet, Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients, has more information about unlicensed medicines. If you would like a copy, please ask a member of staff caring for you. Alternatively you can call the Pharmacy Medicines Helpline (contact details at the end of this leaflet).

What are the risks?
Like all medicines, Dysport® can cause side effects, but not everybody gets them. Some of the more common side effects are:

- pain or bruising at the injection site
- flu-like symptoms (tiredness and headache)
- excessive muscle weakness
- skin rash/itchiness.

Our leaflet, Unlicensed medicines – a guide for patients, has more information about unlicensed medicines. If you would like a copy, please ask a member of staff caring for you. Alternatively you can call the Pharmacy Medicines Helpline (contact details at the end of this leaflet).
If you have any of the following symptoms, please seek immediate medical advice:

- problems swallowing, breathing or with your speech
- difficulty in breathing with or without swelling of the face, lips, tongue and/or throat, redness of the skin or an itchy lumpy rash (urticaria). This may mean you are having an allergic reaction to Dysport®.

You will be asked to wait in the clinic for a short time after you have been given the injection, to check for any allergic reactions.

If you would like more information about side effects, please speak to the doctor or physiotherapist caring for you, or see the manufacturer’s information leaflet that comes with the medicine (please ask us for a copy if you do not have one). Alternatively, you can call the Pharmacy Medicines Helpline.

**Can everyone have the injection?**

You should not have the injection if you:

- are allergic to botulinum toxin or human albumin (blood product)
- have an infection at the injection site
- have had any botulinum toxin injection within the last three months
- feel unwell
- are pregnant
- have a pre-existing neuromuscular disease
- are a Jehovah’s witness
- do not want the injection.

It is very important that you let us know if you have had any injections of botulinum toxin in the last three months, as giving two or more doses in this timeframe may cause severe muscle weakness. If you take medicines to thin your blood, such as warfarin, or have a pre-existing swallowing problem, your suitability for the injection will be discussed with you.

**Are there any alternatives?**

Alternatives to the injection include oral (by mouth) anti-spasticity medications. These are usually used to treat more generalised spasticity and they are associated with more side effects. If you would like further information on these medicines, please speak to your doctor or physiotherapist.

**Consent - asking for your consent**

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.

If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

**Will you need to do anything before the injection?**

The injections are given in the outpatient clinic by the consultant or clinical specialist physiotherapist. They will ask you about any other medicines you are currently taking to make
sure there are no drug interactions, or precautions that need to be taken. There is nothing else that you need to do before the injection.

What happens during the injection appointment?
Once you have given your consent and the staff are happy that you are ready to go ahead, you will be placed in a comfortable position. The skin around the area to be injected will be cleaned with antiseptic. A needle is then gently inserted into the affected muscle(s) and the Dysport® is injected. A cotton swab is placed over the site for a few minutes to minimise bleeding.

Will you feel any pain?
You may experience some mild discomfort when the Dysport® is being injected, but the injection is not painful. Sometimes the injection site can be sore for a few hours after the procedure.

What happens after the procedure?
You will be asked to wait for a short time after your injection to check for any reactions. If you don’t have any reactions, you can go home. The toxin usually starts to work 4-7 days after the injection, and its peak effect can be seen after 10-14 days. The effect of the injection varies from person to person but lasts for 3-4 months.

What do you need to do after you go home?
You may be referred for physiotherapy or occupational therapy treatment after the injection. This might include doing some stretches to the injected muscle or having a special splint made to stretch the injected muscle. It is very important to follow the advice from the therapists, as it will make the botulinum toxin more effective.

Will you have a follow-up appointment?
You may be asked to come to a follow-up appointment a few weeks after your injection, to check your progress. Sometimes, more than one injection is needed and this can be discussed at this appointment.

Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns about Dysport® injections, please contact the spasticity clinic, t: 020 7188 5088, Monday to Friday, 8.30am-4.30pm. We will try to answer your question during these hours but you can also leave a message at any time, and one of the clinicians will contact you as soon as possible.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit, w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

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, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

Leaflet number: 3796/VER3
Date published: August 2020
Review date: August 2023
© 2020 Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust
A list of sources is available on request

Our values: Put patients first | Take pride in what we do | Respect others | Strive to be the best | Act with integrity