

# Botulinum Toxin Patient Advice Sheet

## Dudley Rehabilitation Services Patient Information Leaflet

### Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about botulinum toxin injections and how they can help you. Staff will discuss everything in this leaflet with you, but if you have any questions, please speak to a member of the clinic team.

### What are botulinum toxin injections?

Botulinum toxin is a substance produced by a type of bacterium and it has been developed into a treatment for spasticity. The toxin is diluted in order to inject it into a muscle, where it blocks the communication between nerves and the muscle. This leads to temporary weakness and relaxation of that muscle. The injection of spastic muscles with botulinum toxin is only done when the muscle overactivity is causing a significant problem or risk to the individual.

## **What is focal spasticity?**

After damage to the brain or spinal cord, muscles can become overactive and stiff (this is known as spasticity). When this happens to a single muscle or a small group of muscles, rather than throughout the body, it is called focal (localised) spasticity. Sometimes this stiffness in a muscle can help a person to do something, such as standing when leg muscles are very weak. However, it can sometimes lead to problems, such as difficulties with daily tasks or pain. Prolonged spasticity can lead to a loss of a range of movement in a muscle.

## **What are the aims of botulinum toxin injections?**

Botulinum toxin injections are used for a number of different reasons:

- To optimise the effect of treatments aimed at maintaining or increasing a range of movement
- To improve/enable tasks (such as being able to open your hand for washing)
- To improve or enable active functional activity (such as relaxing the calf muscles to enable the foot to be flat on the ground when standing)
- To decrease pain
- To improve posture.

## **What are the alternatives to botulinum toxin injections?**

Botulinum toxin injections are used to help staff carry out physical treatments, such as putting a splint on. These interventions can be undertaken without the injection but may not be as effective.

Alternatively, or additionally, tablet medications for spasticity can be tried on certain patients.

## **How long do the effects of botulinum toxin injections last?**

The effects of botulinum toxin injections come on gradually and usually peak at approximately 2 weeks. They usually last for approximately 3 to 4 months, gradually wearing off.

## **Are there side effects from botulinum toxin injections?**

Serious complications following botulinum toxin injections are rare, however the following have been known to occur:

- Pain or bruising where the injection is given
- flu-like symptoms
- Excessive muscle weakness and temporary swallowing problems
- Rarely, there is potential for anaphylaxis, which is a severe allergic reaction to the medication and requires urgent medical attention.

If you believe you have had a serious reaction to an injection please seek urgent medical attention at the nearest Accident and Emergency Department. For less serious possible side effects please consult your GP.

If you are pregnant or think you may become pregnant, please inform the clinic team.

If you have concerns about the injection or associated treatments, or you would like to discuss the issues raised in this leaflet, please speak to the clinic team.

#### **Contact details for advice during working hours:**

Corbett Rehabilitation Centre Monday-Friday 8:30-16:30

Tel: 01384 244705

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Corbett rehabilitation centre on: 01384 456111

#### **This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

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Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru vă rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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