Botox treatment for an overactive bladder

Botox is the trade name for botulinum toxin A. It is used as a beauty treatment to get rid of wrinkles and to stop people sweating, but it can also be used to treat a variety of muscular disorders. These include muscular spasms and over-activity of the bladder wall muscle, which causes urinary frequency (an urgent to desire to pass urine) and is often associated with urinary leakage.

Botox may be offered as a treatment when other treatments such as bladder training and anti-cholinergic tablets such as oxybutynin, tolterodine and solifenacin have not helped.

Expected benefits of Botox treatment
Botox is highly effective in relieving the symptoms caused by an overactive bladder. It reduces the frequency and urgency of needing to go to the toilet and reduces urinary incontinence in 75% of women undergoing the injection.

For the majority of patients the beneficial effects are usually seen three to four days after the injection. The Botox injection is expected to last for six to nine months, but this will vary for each patient.

The effect of Botox gradually wears off and most patients will require further injections.

Treatment
A thin tube called a cystoscope is inserted into your bladder and a tiny camera is attached to the tube so the surgeon can look at the inside of your bladder. Through the tube the surgeon makes twenty injections of Botox into specific sites of the bladder wall.

The procedure is usually performed under a general anaesthetic but occasionally it is performed under local anaesthetic whereby anaesthetic gel is put into the urethra to numb it, there are very few nerves in the bladder wall and you should not feel anything. In most cases the tube will be inserted for less than five minutes.

After the treatment, you will be asked to stay in the day surgery unit for a couple of hours. We will make sure you have passed urine without any problems and that you feel well enough to go home.

Side effects
Urinary retention
• Up to one in twenty patients may have difficulty emptying their bladder fully after Botox treatment. This is not always apparent directly after treatment, instead it may take a few days or even weeks to become a problem. It is important to contact us for advice if you notice it is more difficult to pass urine or you develop an infection.

• Inability to empty your bladder is usually a temporary problem lasting a few days or weeks but you must be aware that it can last longer, sometimes until the effect of the Botox wears off. In a few women it can be severe enough to require catheterisation up to four times a day.

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It is difficult to predict which patients will develop urinary retention so all patients need to be able to use a small disposable catheter to empty their bladder. You will be taught clean intermittent self catheterisation (CISC) before receiving Botox. This ensures that all patients are capable of performing CISC should they have a problem. The catheter does not stay in your bladder so you will not require a bag.

Blood in your urine
• This is usually minor and settles down without any treatment.

Urinary tract infection
• Symptoms include increased frequency, pain or burning when passing urine and feeling unwell. This is treatable with antibiotics.

Other side effects
• Some side effects may occur because the drug spreads to other parts of the body. This is extremely rare (less than 1 in 10,000 chances) and may include muscle weakness, which can affect swallowing, speech or breathing. If you experience any problems in these areas you should let us know straight away.

After the treatment
You can return to work the day after your Botox injection.

An appointment will be made for you to be seen in the outpatients clinic in six weeks.

Further information
If you have any questions about your treatment contact the urodynamics department on 023 8079 8967. Our opening hours are Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 4.30pm. An answer machine is available at other times.