

Patient information factsheet

Botox® for the prevention of chronic migraine

We have given you this factsheet because you have been diagnosed with chronic migraine (when you have 15 or more headache days a month (with features of migraine headache on at least eight days per month) for more than three months).

This factsheet contains information about a preventative treatment for chronic migraine called Botox®. It explains what Botox® is, how it works and the possible side effects of the treatment. We hope it will answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is Botox®?

Botox® (also known as botulinum toxin type A) is a drug that can be injected into a muscle to temporarily stop it from working. It is made from a toxin produced by the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum*. It is a safe treatment when used in very small doses (enough to weaken but not paralyse muscles).

Botox® comes in the form of injections. It is used to treat a variety of health conditions and used cosmetically to relax the facial muscles that cause wrinkles.

How does it work?

Botox® is injected into the head and neck area to temporarily reduce how many migraine attacks you get and how severe they are. It works by blocking neurotransmitters (chemical messengers in the body that pass pain signals through the nervous system).

Is Botox® suitable for everyone?

Botox® has been approved for use by the NHS for the treatment of chronic migraine in adults. However, we can only prescribe this type of treatment if you:

- have already tried at least three migraine preventative medications.
- are not taking painkillers too often (in particular, triptans like sumatriptan should not be used on more than 10 days per month and opioids like codeine should be avoided).
- have kept a headache diary for at least three months before having Botox® (you must then continue with this diary while you receive treatment).

Botox® is **not** suitable for:

- anyone who is pregnant (it is recommended that you consult your headache specialist if you are planning to get pregnant).
- anyone who is breastfeeding or planning to breastfeed (please ask your headache specialist for more information).

Patient information factsheet

- children (under 18 years of age).
- other types of headache (including episodic migraine (headache on fewer than 15 days a month), tension-type headache, medication overuse headache and cluster headache).

The risks of Botox® may be increased if you:

- have a neurological disease that causes weakness around your face (for example, myasthenia gravis or Bell's palsy).
- are on blood-thinning treatment (anticoagulants).
- have had botulinum toxin (including cosmetic Botox®) injections within the last 12 weeks.
- have recently been prescribed aminoglycoside antibiotics (such as gentamicin).
- have damaged, broken or infected skin around your forehead, ears, neck or shoulders (the areas which will be injected).

If you're not sure whether Botox® is a suitable treatment for you, please contact us for advice.

How should I prepare for Botox® treatment?

No preparation is needed for this treatment.

What will happen during the Botox® treatment?

When you arrive for your appointment, a doctor or specialist nurse from the headache team will explain the treatment to you and answer any questions you may have. We will then ask you if you are happy to go ahead with the treatment.

We will then ask you to sit on a chair and give you 31 small injections of Botox® into the muscles in and around your forehead, ears, neck and shoulders. Although we will use a very fine needle, you may still experience some discomfort during the treatment. Please let us know if you are uncomfortable at any point and we can take a small break in between injections or go at a pace more suitable for you.

The treatment itself will only take a few minutes, but please allow 30 minutes in total for the appointment.

What will happen after the Botox® treatment?

You will need to stay in the clinic for a few minutes after your first Botox® treatment. This is so we can make sure you feel well before you go home and don't have an allergic reaction to the treatment.

You will usually be able to resume your normal daily activities immediately after the treatment. However, for your first Botox® treatment, we recommend asking someone to give you a lift to and from your appointment in case you feel faint or unwell after the treatment.

It is normal to feel tired on the day of or the day after Botox® treatment, particularly if you were nervous or anxious beforehand.

For 24 hours after your Botox® treatment, you should avoid:

- touching or rubbing the injection sites
- washing your face and hair

How long will I need to have Botox® for?

Most people will need Botox® treatment every 12 weeks. We will give you two treatments of Botox® to start with. You will then have an appointment with a headache specialist who will review how effective the treatment has been. If your migraine frequency reduces by more than 30%, we will continue Botox® treatment for one year (five cycles of treatment). After a year, you will have a six month break from Botox® treatment (during this time you must keep a record of your headaches in a headache diary). You will then have a follow-up appointment with a headache specialist who will determine whether you would benefit from further Botox® treatment or not.

We may stop the treatment before one year if:

- after two treatments, the number of migraine headaches you experience has not decreased by 30%.
- your migraine frequency reduces to less than 15 days of headache each month for three months.

Will I be monitored while having Botox®?

You must keep a record of your headaches in a headache diary for the first year after starting Botox® treatment (and a further six months after stopping treatment). In your diary, you will need to record whether you had a headache and how severe it was each day. You will need to send us your headache diary after every 12-week cycle of Botox® treatment.

You can submit your headache diary to us in several ways. For example, you can:

- email it to us at neurologyadmin@uhs.nhs.uk
- upload it to My Medical Record (for more information about this, please visit: www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-patients/my-medical-record)
- bring it with you when you come in for your clinic appointments
- send it to us in the post

Botox® treatment appointments will all be in our clinic. You will then have a review appointment with a headache specialist after your second treatment and then again after you have had one year of treatment. These review appointments may be in-person or over the telephone.

What are the possible side effects?

Botox® is very safe, but like all treatments, it can cause some side effects.

Common side effects

- An increase in head, neck and shoulder pain or stiffness.
- A small change in the appearance of your forehead (this is because Botox® weakens the muscles it is injected into).
- Pain, bruising, bleeding or infection at the injection site.

Less common side effects

- A droopy eyelid or eyebrow (ptosis).

These side effects are usually temporary and will improve after a few weeks, as the effects of the Botox® wear off. If you experience any side effects or have any concerns, please contact us for advice.

Patient information factsheet

Rare side effects

- Muscle weakness in the head and neck area (for example, you may experience swallowing difficulties).
- An allergic reaction (such as itching or a rash).
- Anaphylaxis (a life-threatening allergic reaction that happens very quickly and needs immediate treatment) is rare. For more information about anaphylaxis, including the symptoms to look out for, visit: www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaphylaxis

If you experience any of the rare side effects, contact your general practitioner (GP) or NHS 111 for advice.

In an emergency, for example if you experience any anaphylaxis symptoms, call 999 immediately.

Some people feel faint or dizzy when having injections. If this is the case for you, please let the doctor or specialist nurse giving you the Botox® treatment know before they start so they can take suitable precautions.

How effective is Botox®?

Botox® will not work for everyone. However, it has been shown to be effective for at least half of the people who have tried it. The benefits from the treatment will also vary from person to person. Some people only notice the benefit after the second Botox® treatment. If the treatment is successful, most people will still get some headaches, but they will be less severe and occur less often.

What happens if the treatment is not effective?

If Botox® does not work for you, your headache specialist will discuss alternative migraine treatments that may be suitable for you. If no further specialist medication is necessary, we will usually discharge you back to your GP for ongoing supportive care.

Contact us

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact your consultant's secretary using the email address below. When you email, make sure you include your name, date of birth and hospital number.

Email: neurologyadmin@uhs.nhs.uk

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**