

Patient information factsheet

Botulinum toxin (Botox) injection for a squint

Your doctor has recommended that you have a botulinum toxin (Botox) injection to treat your squint. We hope this factsheet will help to answer some of the questions you may have.

What is botulinum toxin?

Botulinum toxin (Botox) is a chemical that can be injected into a muscle to temporarily stop the muscle from working.

How is Botox used to treat squints?

Botox has been used to treat squints since 1979. It is injected into one of the muscles which moves the eye. Over a few days after the injection, the muscle stops working, causing a change in the position of the eye.

In most cases, the eye gradually turns in the opposite direction (for example, it turns inwards if there was an outward squint), before gradually straightening again as the effect of the injection begins to wear off. The eye usually returns to its original position after a few months once the injection has fully worn off.

Why do we use Botox?

There are two ways to correct a squint. The first option is to use Botox, which usually has a temporary effect. The other option is to have surgery to move the position of the eye muscle. This has a more permanent effect.

We may recommend that you have Botox instead of surgery if there is a risk to your health from a general anaesthetic. For the Botox injection, you would only need to have anaesthetic eye drops, but for surgery, you would need to have a general anaesthetic. We may also recommend Botox if you have had several squint operations before and we think that more surgery may not be effective.

We can also use Botox to check that you will be comfortable with your eyes straightened, before you go on to have squint surgery. Some people experience double vision after having their squint corrected or find that double vision that was there before is not helped by having the eye straightened. Botox allows us to temporarily straighten the eye so that you can see what it is like. If you are comfortable, we can go on to do surgery.

Will I need to have more than one injection?

Occasionally, the first Botox injection is not effective and needs to be repeated.

For most people, the effect of the Botox wears off over several months. If you are having Botox instead of surgery, you may need repeated injections to keep your eye straight. Over time, the frequency of the injections can usually reduce, and for some people, the effect can become long-lasting after several injections.

Can the Botox affect my general health?

Only very tiny amounts of Botox are used in the injection, so there is no risk of it affecting muscles outside the eye.

When will the injection start to work and how long will it last?

You will not notice any change immediately after the injection. After two to three days, you may notice that your eye is straightening, and that it does not move fully to the side of the injected muscle. The eye may turn in the opposite direction and will then gradually straighten.

Eventually, the eye is likely to slowly return to its original position. This usually takes about three months.

What are the risks?

- The squint may not be fully corrected.
- The injection may need to be repeated at a later date if it is not effective or when the effects wear off.
- In very rare cases, the needle may penetrate the eye and affect the vision.

What are the side effects?

- Although your eye will be numbed with local anaesthetic eye drops, you may experience some discomfort during the injection.
- Occasionally, the upper eyelid can droop for up to a few weeks after the injection.
- Your eye may be red after the injection.
- You may notice some double vision.

What is the treatment procedure?

You may need to see an orthoptist to have an assessment before your injection.

We will put anaesthetic drops into the eye to ensure it is completely numb before the injection. Once the drops have worked, you will be called into the injection room.

You will be asked to lie down and some electrodes (small sensors) will be attached around your eye. The electrodes connect to a machine which detects electrical signals from the eye muscle that is to be injected. This helps with the accuracy of the injection.

When the needle is in position, the machine will emit a buzzing sound which indicates the Botox is ready to be injected. At this point, you may feel some discomfort. You will need to lie still for a few minutes after the injection.

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What will happen after the injection?

We recommend that you wait for half an hour before leaving the hospital after the injection.

Your eye will be numb for about two hours until the drops wear off. To protect your eye during this time, we suggest that you wear your prescription glasses or sunglasses to go home.

You will be given an appointment so that we can examine your eyes after the injection. If this is your first injection, this follow-up appointment will usually be for two weeks later. If this is a repeat injection, the follow-up appointment will depend on the reason for the injection. We will discuss this with you.

If you have had the injection to see whether you will be affected by double vision, please keep a note of any changes and when they occur. It is particularly important to record whether you notice any double vision when your eye is straight, as the injection wears off.

If the injection causes temporary double vision, you should not drive until the double vision has gone. For more information about driving and double vision, please see DVLA website at: www.gov.uk/diplopia-and-driving

Contact us

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact the orthoptic department on telephone: **023 8120 4789**.

Useful links

Further information about squints is available at: www.squintclinic.com

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