

Patient information factsheet

Botulinum toxin (Dysport) injection for a squint

We have given you this factsheet because your doctor has recommended that you have a botulinum toxin injection to treat your squint (where the eyes point in different directions). It explains what this treatment involves, so you know what to expect. We hope this factsheet helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to your eye doctor or orthoptist, or contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is botulinum toxin?

Botulinum toxin is a medicine that can temporarily weaken muscles. The form of botulinum toxin that we use is called Dysport.

How is botulinum toxin used to treat squints?

Botulinum toxin 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 about three months once the injection has fully worn off.

Why do we use botulinum toxin?

There are two ways to correct a squint:

- squint surgery
- botulinum toxin injections

Squint surgery involves changing the position of one or more of the muscles which move the eye and has a more permanent effect than botulinum toxin which usually wears off over time.

Although surgery is a more permanent treatment for a squint, it may not be suitable for some people as it involves having a general anaesthetic (a medicine that puts you into a state of controlled unconsciousness so you do not feel anything during an operation or procedure).

If there is a risk to your health from a general anaesthetic, we may recommend you have botulinum toxin injections instead of surgery, as these can be done when you are awake using anaesthetic eye drops.

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We may also recommend botulinum toxin if you have had several squint operations before and we think that more surgery may not be effective.

We can also use botulinum toxin 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 their existing double vision is not helped by having their eye straightened. Botulinum toxin allows us to temporarily straighten the eye so that you can see what it is like, and if you are comfortable, we can go on to do surgery.

Will I need to have more than one injection?

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

For most people, the effect of the botulinum toxin wears off after a few months. If you are having botulinum toxin 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.

What are the risks?

The risks from botulinum toxin injections are all very rare, but include:

- a scratch to the front of the eye (the cornea) when the anaesthetic eye drops are given or while the eye is numb
- eye penetration (a single entry wound) or perforation (an entry and an exit wound) caused by the needle
- significant bleeding around the eye, potentially causing serious eye or vision damage
- permanent paralysis of the injected muscle

Can the botulinum toxin affect my general health?

Only very tiny amounts of botulinum toxin are used in the injection, so the risk of it affecting muscles outside of the eye is very small. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency released the following information in July 2026:

- Treatment with botulinum toxin has in rare cases caused botulism (a rare, life-threatening illness caused by a powerful neurotoxin that attacks the body's nerves and leads to muscle paralysis) and other serious adverse reactions and symptoms which can occur up to four weeks after treatment. For more information about botulism, visit: www.nhs.uk/conditions/botulism
- You should seek immediate medical attention via emergency services if you experience any symptoms of botulism after having treatment with botulinum toxin, including:
 - difficulty swallowing
 - slurred speech
 - difficulty breathing
- You should report any suspected side effects of botulinum toxin injections to the Yellow Card scheme (for more information about this, visit: <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk>).

It is important to note that we have not had anyone develop botulism in several decades of providing this treatment. However, we need to let you know about this information so that you are fully informed before agreeing to the treatment.

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, your upper eyelid can droop for up to a few weeks after the injection.
- Your eye may be red after the injection.
- The injection can cause temporary double vision in people who did not have double vision before. The double vision should go as the injection wears off, but you should not drive until it has gone.

What will happen during the treatment?

You may need to see an orthoptist to have an assessment before you have a botulinum toxin injection.

We will put anaesthetic drops into your eye to ensure it is completely numb before we give you the injection. Once the drops have worked, we will call you into the injection room.

We will ask you to lie down for the treatment. We will then attach some electrodes (small sensors) around your eye. The electrodes will be connected to a machine which will detect 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 make a buzzing sound which indicates the botulinum toxin 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.

What will happen after the treatment?

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

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 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. Your eye may then gradually turn in the opposite direction before gradually straightening. Eventually, your eye is likely to slowly return to its original position. This usually takes about three months.

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. **You should not drive until the double vision has gone.**

Will I receive any follow-up care?

We will give you a follow-up appointment after the treatment. If this is your first injection, the appointment will usually be two to three weeks later and may be a face-to-face or a telephone appointment. If this is a repeat injection, the follow-up appointment will depend on the reason for the injection. We will discuss this with you.

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Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Orthoptic department

Telephone: **023 8120 4789** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm)

Useful links

www.squintclinic.com

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 **PFSH@uhs.nhs.uk**

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

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