

Further information

If you have any questions or concerns about this treatment, please speak to a member of the team.

Contact telephone numbers

Acute Stroke Unit, Lister Hospital

☎ 01438 285565

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☎ 01438 285222

Patient Information

Botulinum toxin injection for the treatment of spasticity

Stroke Department

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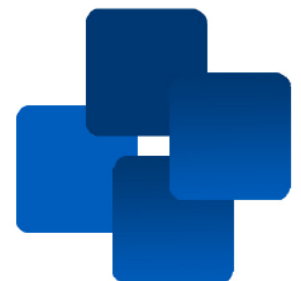
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Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to explain what spasticity is and to give more information about one of the treatments used to help relieve the symptoms of this condition.

What is spasticity?

Spasticity is a condition which can develop following damage to the brain or spinal cord. It causes certain muscles to become overactive and to feel stiff. This stiffness or tightness of the muscles can interfere with normal movement, speech and walking.

If the stiffness occurs in a single muscle or a small group of muscles this is called **focal** or **regional spasticity** and can be considered for treatment with **botulinum toxin**. Occasionally, the muscle stiffness can be useful, such as enabling someone to stand when the leg muscles are very weak. However, often it can lead to problems with pain and restricted ability to function in daily tasks and, over time, the stiffness can lead to deformity.

What is botulinum toxin?

Botulinum toxin is a substance produced by a bacterium and has been developed into a treatment for spasticity. It is administered (given) by injection into some of the affected muscles. This blocks the communication between the nerves and muscle, which leads to a temporary weakness and relaxation of that muscle. Botulinum toxin is only injected into spastic (stiff) muscles when the muscle overactivity is causing a significant problem or risk to that individual.

The aims of using botulinum toxin injections are:

- To optimise the effect of treatments aimed at maintaining or increasing range of movement
- To improve/enable tasks (such as being able to open your hand for washing)

- To improve or enable functional activity, i.e. relaxing the calf muscle to enable the foot to be flat on the ground in standing
- To reduce pain
- To improve posture

If you think you are or might become pregnant, please inform your treating consultant.

Are there alternatives to botulinum toxin injections?

Other options, such as careful positioning, splints and stretching can be used but may not be as effective if not used in conjunction with the injection. Oral medications can be used in certain patients.

How long do the effects last?

The effects usually peak at two weeks after the injection, lasting up to 3-4 months and then gradually wearing off.

Are there side effects?

Serious complications are rare, however, the following side effects have been noted:

- Pain at the injection site
- Bruising at the injection site
- Flu-like symptoms
- Excessive muscle weakness and temporary swallowing problems
- Rarely, there is the potential for anaphylaxis – a severe allergic reaction

If you think you (or the patient you are accompanying/care for) might be experiencing an allergic reaction, please inform the medical team immediately.