Patient information

Botulinum toxin treatment for improving facial symmetry after facial nerve palsy

This leaflet is for patients considering botulinum toxin injections for the correction of asymmetry of facial appearance as a result of facial nerve weakness.

What is the effect of botulinum toxin?
After facial nerve palsy, the muscles of the unaffected side of the face will overact as a normal compensatory mechanism. This can make the face look asymmetrical. Botulinum toxin causes a temporary partial or complete paralysis (weakness) of the muscle into which it has been injected and can reduce the excessive muscle action on the non-paralysed side of the face to improve facial symmetry.

Will botulinum toxin affect my general health?
The treatment is safe and there is no risk of developing botulism or food poisoning.

We have never had a patient who has experienced any general health problem due to botulinum, but all medication carries a small potential risk of a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). There is no known risk when the treatment is given to women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, but some patients prefer to postpone treatment until they have given birth or weaned their child.

Who will I see when I attend the clinic?
You will be seen by a nurse or healthcare assistant and then one of the doctors working with the consultant ophthalmologist. If the treatment is suitable for you, you will be asked to read and sign a consent form, and you will usually receive the treatment on the same day in the clinic. You should expect to be in the clinic for the whole morning or afternoon.
What is the treatment procedure?
You can be given some skin anaesthetic cream (EMLA/Ametop) to numb the area if you prefer. If so, please ask your doctor prior to the procedure. You will then have small injections of low-dose botulinum toxin into the overacting facial muscles. This is usually very well tolerated and takes less than one minute.

Temporary double vision – you should **not** drive while you have double vision. It is very important that you discuss this with the doctor before treatment if this is of particular concern to you (see DVLA website: double vision and driving)
• Slight bruising around the injection site
• Drooping of the face on the injected side

What happens after the injection?
You will be able to go home after the injection. You may feel an ache in the injected area and you can take a painkiller if necessary.

When should I expect to see an effect from the treatment?
The effect is usually noticed about two days after the injection is given.

When do I return to the clinic?
You will have an appointment made to return to the clinic after two weeks to see if the treatment was effective and to consider further treatment if necessary.

Other important information
The majority of medicines used in the UK hold a 'product licence' or 'marketing authorisation' which is granted by a government organisation. The licence covers specific conditions in which the medicine can be used to treat people. Although botulinum toxin has been used for treating eye conditions at Moorfields since 1982 and has been used for improving facial symmetry since 1989, this particular condition is not covered in the product licence. However, it has been judged by the prescribing doctor that botulinum toxin should be used in this way to satisfy an individual patient need and it is in the best interests of the patient. Records are kept of all injections and patient details.
If you have any reason to believe that you may be a carrier of hepatitis or the HIV virus, please make sure that you tell the nurse or doctor who sees you in the clinic. The information is confidential but it is essential that we are informed.

If you are unclear about any aspect of this treatment or have any questions, please ask the doctor to explain further.

Moorfields Direct telephone helpline
Phone: 020 7566 2345
Monday–Friday, 9am–9pm
Information and advice on eye conditions and treatments from experienced ophthalmic-trained nurses.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)
Phone: 020 7566 2324 or 020 7566 2325
Email: pals@moorfields.nhs.uk

Moorfields’ PALS team provides confidential advice and support to help you with any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different services available at Moorfields. The PALS team can also advise you on how to make a complaint.

Your right to treatment within 18 weeks
Under the NHS constitution, all patients have the right to begin consultant-led treatment within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP. Moorfields is committed to fulfilling this right, but if you feel that we have failed to do so, please contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS) who will be able to advise you further (see above). For more information about your rights under the NHS constitution, visit www.nhs.uk/choiceinthenhs