

## Patient information

# Botulinum (Botox) toxin injection

You have been recommended to undergo a botulinum toxin (Botox) injection procedure. For this procedure, Botox is injected into muscles in the voice box, resulting in a temporary paresis or paralysis of the injected muscles. This temporarily weakens the muscles enough to allow smoother voicing.

Diagnoses that benefit from this procedure are adductor spasmodic dysphonia, abductor spasmodic dysphonia and mixed spasmodic dysphonia. Botox injections are the gold standard treatment for this diagnosis. In rare cases it can be used to treat muscle tension dysphonia.

This procedure is indicated for patients experiencing symptoms such as:

- A strained-strangled, harsh voice quality
- Pitch breaks
- A transient breathy voice quality
- Considerable effort and fatigue when talking
- Vocal tremor.

Botox injections last for around 3-4 months. Results vary from patient to patient. All patients require regular injections as spasmodic dysphonia cannot be cured. Some patients decide after time that they do not wish to continue with treatment, whereas others may choose to receive regular injections for life.

## Procedure

You may eat and drink normally before the procedure.

Topical or local anaesthetic can help make your treatment comfortable. This process takes about 20 minutes. The anaesthetic is applied to your nose and throat via a gel, spray, and injection. We then allow time for the anaesthetic to work before beginning the procedure. You will be lying down on a couch, and we place the camera in your nose so

that we can view the inside of your throat. We then inject the Botox through the neck. This can take as little as two minutes, depending on your ability to lie still, but may take longer depending on your ability to tolerate the procedure. It is helpful if you focus on deep breathing and do not cough or swallow whilst the needle is in place.

## **Recovery period**

You can begin to eat and drink from one hour after the procedure (once the anaesthetic has worn off). It can take 2-3 weeks to experience noticeable effects of the injection.

## **Side effects**

Side effects can include tenderness and mild swelling at the injection site which is likely to self-resolve quickly, difficulty in swallowing (as the Botox may spread to the swallowing muscles), which usually resolves after two weeks, risk of bleeding during the procedure which is usually minimal and is self-controlled, a small bruise might form in the neck at the site of the injection but again this is usually minimal and self-limiting and will resolve over a few days, a temporary breathy and weak voice, and the risk of infection.

If you experience swallowing difficulties, take extra care when drinking liquids, by taking smaller sips than usual, to stop the liquids from going down the wrong way. Choosing softer foods might be beneficial temporarily if solids are an issue. There is a very small risk of bleeding into the airway following the procedure, which might present itself by coughing some blood. If this happens you need to attend A&E immediately. If you are concerned you may have an infection, please contact your GP/the Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) department.

## **Complications**

Sometimes the Botox doesn't get into the exact place needed. This may be particularly true in patients who are difficult to inject because of their anatomy.

The effects of the injection differ from person to person and with each time you have an injection. Some injections seem to have little effect whilst others work very well.

## **Other support**

The Dystonia Society can provide national and local support and information. Contact [www.dystonia.org.uk](http://www.dystonia.org.uk).

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)

<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>

