

Department of Urology

Botulinum Toxin (Botox) use in the treatment of the overactive bladder

What is an overactive bladder?

An overactive bladder is when the bladder contracts suddenly without you having control. This causes the symptoms of urgency and leakage of urine.

What is Botulinum Toxin?

It is a toxin that acts on nerve-endings. It has been used under licence for many years to treat muscle spasms, foot deformities in children with cerebral palsy and for excessive sweating under the armpit.

Is it licensed for use in the bladder?

This drug is licensed for use in the bladder.

In recent years doctors in both Europe and the USA have reported good success in this treatment of bladder over-activity.

How is Botox injected into the bladder?

You will have a special tube inserted into your bladder under a local anaesthetic. 100 – 300 units of the drug are injected in 10 – 30 sites within your bladder using a very fine needle. The procedure takes 15 minutes and is relatively painless. The few patients that we have treated with this procedure reported that they had only mild pain. The average pain score was 3/10 where zero is painless and ten is extremely painful. You will be given antibiotics before and for three days after the procedure.



Admission and Discharge

- You will be admitted to the Day Unit at University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire
- The procedure is done under a local anaesthetic
- You will be discharged as soon as you pass urine
- You will be given a supply of antibiotics
- If you have any problems post-injection please contact Sister Sarah Roth on 024 7696 5296
- You will be reviewed every three months in the Out-Patient Clinic

What are the benefits of Botox?

If the procedure is successful you will find that your frequency and urgency to pass urine is greatly reduced. Leakage of urine may decrease or disappear completely. Generally your quality of life will improve significantly following the injection. In most cases you will be able to come off the anti-cholinergic medication for your bladder altogether.

What is the success rate of Botox?

Botox improves symptoms in between 60 – 75% of patients with an over-active (irritable) bladder. It is more effective in patients with a neurological cause for their urinary problem such as multiple sclerosis.

What are the side-effects associated with Botox?

Botox is a very safe product but as with any drug there are side-effects associated with the drug. These include:

- Brief flu-like symptoms
- A short lived rash
- An inability to pass urine that may last many months and would require you to use a catheter
- A few cases of muscle weakness have been reported, especially in patients with a neurological problem (such as multiple sclerosis)

What criteria must I fulfil before I will be offered Botox?

As it is an unlicensed product you need to fulfil certain criteria before you can have Botox injected into your bladder.

- You should have tried at least two drugs that are used to treat bladder over-activity. These may have been unsuccessful because your condition didn't improve or due to severe side effects.
- In case there is the side effect of not being able to empty your bladder, you should be physically able to empty your bladder yourself, using a catheter (or have a carer who could do it for you).
- You must have the diagnosis confirmed by urodynamics (bladder pressure studies).
- You must not have an indwelling catheter (a permanent tube in your bladder) at the time of the injection.
- You must not have a urine infection at the time of the injection. You must not have any bleeding disorder or be on Warfarin at the time of the injection.
- You must be prepared to have regular follow-up appointments

If the effect of Botox wears off you may need a repeat urodynamics (bladder pressure studies).

How long does the effect of Botox last?

Botox is effective in 65 – 75 % of patients. If it is successful it generally lasts for between 6-18 months.

Can I have repeat injections of Botox?

Botox has been re-injected a few times with good results. It must be understood that it is a new treatment for an over-active bladder and its long-term effects are still not clear.

Patient Information

For further information contact please contact Sarah Roth – Clinical Nurse Specialist for Continence and Urology on 024 7696 5296.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 5296 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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