

Paediatric Ophthalmology Service

Botulinum Toxin (Botox®) Treatment for Squint

What is Botulinum Toxin?

Most people will have heard of the use of Botulinum toxin (one brand of this product being 'Botox®') being used by aesthetic/cosmetic surgeons to help make people look younger by reducing wrinkles. But Botulinum toxin has also been used by some surgeons since 1979 to treat various medical conditions including certain types of squint.

How does Botulinum toxin work?

It causes a temporary (months) paralysis of the muscle it is injected into.

Is it safe?

There is no risk to general health from the injection of Botulinum toxin in to eye muscles. Used in this way there is no risk of developing botulism or food poisoning.

Who does my child see when we come to have the treatment?

Your child will initially be examined by an Orthoptist before seeing one of the surgeons who can give the treatment. If the treatment is suitable for your child, you and/or your child will be asked to sign a consent form and their name will be put on the waiting list to have the treatment.



Patient Information

How is the treatment given?

This is usually done under sedation so the child does not feel the injection at all.

Electromyography is used to help locate muscle by using some wires attached to the forehead. This is completely painless.

How quickly will the treatment work and how long does it last?

It takes around 2-3 days for the effect to become apparent. It can last for weeks to months but the effect of the toxin will wear off. The squint may actually reverse initially

(For instance an in-turning eye can initially become an out-turning eye and so on) but this is followed by gradual straightening of the eyes as the paralysis wears off. Rarely this change may remain after the Botox® wears off.

What are the possible side effects?

- The squint may reverse initially for a while.
- Sometimes children will get double vision after the injection. This may cause some temporary problems with sports and school and the child may need to cover one eye for a period of time, but only under the advice of the orthoptist or surgeon.
- Temporary drooping of the eyelid on the side that an injection was given, if this happens it usually resolves within a few weeks. There may be slight bruising of the surface of the eye.
- Extremely rarely a patient could get loss of vision on the treated side; this may be temporary or even permanent. This is much less likely than with actual squint surgery, and this problem is extremely rare even with squint surgery (approximately 1 in 20000).

For babies we ask you to bring in their car seat as this helps to keep them more upright. This minimises the risk of Botox® seeping into the lid muscle and causing a droopy eyelid.

Patient Information

We dispose of the needles after one use so there is no risk of cross contamination or infection.

When does my child need to come back to clinic?

We usually like to see patients 10 days or so after their injection to see what effect it has had. Sometimes we may decide to recommend a further injection if the first one has had less of an effect than we hoped for.

Unlicensed use

Botulinum toxin has been used for decades for the treatment of squint but the companies who manufacture it have never applied for a license for its use in the treatment of squints. It is therefore used on a 'named patient' basis.

Further Information

We hope this leaflet will help you to understand the treatment offered to your child. If you feel you need more information or have any concerns please contact the Eye Department on 024 7696 6521.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6521 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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