

Orthoptics

Botox for squints

Botulinum Toxin A (Botox) is a protein that temporarily paralyses muscles. Botox paralyses muscles by blocking the chemical interaction between nerves and muscles.

There are 6 muscles that move each eye and other muscles that move the eye lids. These muscles are injected with Botox for the treatment of some eye conditions.

Botox is used in squints:

- to temporarily straighten the eyes for people with long-standing squints - this is done to determine whether permanent double vision would occur after squint surgery and helps the surgical planning - it also helps the patient to reach a decision regarding surgery.
- to treat a poorly controlled latent squint, thereby reducing double vision and headache. this might allow the patient to regain long-term control without the need for surgery.
- to treat squints caused by paralysis of a muscle, most commonly a 6th nerve palsy. this avoids permanent shortening of other eye muscles and may reduce double vision. the aim is to aid recovery in these types of squint
- to treat a shortened muscle so that permanent surgery can be planned.



Is Botox injection an alternative to squint surgery?

We use Botox to treat squints in some people with a squint where surgery or a general anaesthetic might be of higher risk.

In most cases, the effect of Botox is temporary. We may need to repeat the injection every few months. Occasionally, Botox injections may result in a permanent effect.

What will happen when I come to the Botox clinic?

We use anaesthetic eye drops to numb the surface of your eye.

To find the injection site, we place 2 wires onto your forehead that are connected to an EMG (electromyograph). This allows us to monitor the exact site of the injection by detecting the electrical activity of the muscle to be injected. The electrical activity can be heard through a loudspeaker connected to a monitor during the injection.

We'll ask you to move your eye right and left or up and down during the procedure.

We recommend that someone accompanies you to your appointment. Do not drive yourself to your appointment.

Avoid heavy facial make-up on the day - this makes it more difficult to attach the electrodes to your skin. We'll need to clean your skin before we can attach the electrodes.

This procedure should not be painful and only takes a very short time to carry out.

What happens after this?

We'll advise you to rest for a short while afterwards in the Department until you feel happy to leave. Do not lie down for 1 hour after the injection - this will increase the chance of a droopy eye lid.

Patient Information

Can I drive?

If possible, bring someone with you who can drive you home or accompany you on public transport.

If you have double vision, it's illegal to drive. If you're involved in an accident, your insurance company will be unlikely to support you.

Side effects

Some people feel a slight ache in the eye or eyelids immediately after the injection. If this is not better after an hour, take whatever medication you'd usually take for a headache, such as paracetamol.

There may be some temporary swelling or bruising of the eye or lids.

Squint reversal

You may notice reversal of the direction of the squint (squint can turn the opposite way). This is often the desired effect and we will have discussed this in clinic before the injection.

As the paralysis of the muscle wears off, the eye will gradually straighten.

Double vision

Some people can experience double vision after the procedure. This may be different to any double vision you may have experienced before surgery. It may occasionally have a vertical element, or it may cause disorientation.

Double vision is a temporary side effect. For patients that find it troubling, we can give prisms or occlusive tape to alleviate your symptoms.

If you have significant double vision, do not drive.

Patient Information

Other side effects

There are some other temporary side effects. These will almost always improve without treatment:

- Drooping of the eyelid
- Eye irritation
- Difficulty closing the eye

There is a small chance of damage to the eye or vision if the needle penetrates the coat of the eye. This may introduce infection or bleeding inside the eye.

Can the treatment affect my general health?

Botox has been used to treat eye conditions for more than 20 years and is safe. Allergic reactions are rare. The dose used in the eye is very small and there is no risk to general health, even after repeated injections.

There is no risk of botulism or food poisoning.

There is no known risk to pregnant women, but most patients and surgeons will prefer to postpone the treatment until later.

How long does the effect of Botox last?

The treatment takes effect within 2 to 3 days. The effect will be at its greatest 1 to 2 weeks after treatment. The effect lasts for 2 to 3 months and then slowly wears off.

Follow up

We like to see all our patients 10 days after the injection. If the injection has not produced an adequate effect, we may need to repeat the injection. The procedure cannot be repeated for 12 weeks.

Patient Information

More information

If you have any questions or would like more information, contact us on 024 7696 6521. Please tell us if you've had an injection of Botox.

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.

The Trust operates a smoke-free policy.

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