

Having botulinum toxin injections to treat drooling

Department of Radiology

Information for Patients

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Introduction

If you are an outpatient please read your appointment letter carefully to check which hospital your appointment is at. This leaflet tells you about your treatment. Please read it carefully as it has important information and instructions.

What is drooling?

Drooling happens when you have too much saliva and it spills out of your mouth. The medical name for drooling is sialorrhoea. This can be caused by your body making too much saliva or not clearing saliva from the mouth. This can happen because of certain medical conditions. This includes conditions that affect the nerves (neurological conditions), such as cerebral palsy.

What is botulinum toxin?

Botulinum toxin is a protein (neurotoxin) made naturally by bacteria. It is commonly known as Botox. It has been developed to be used in small doses to treat muscles by making them relax. The effect lasts a few weeks or months.

Why do I need a botulinum toxin injection?

The person who asked for you to have this treatment should have already talked to you about your drooling and why they think this treatment will help you.

They have asked for you to have an ultrasound-guided injection of botulinum toxin into your salivary glands. The toxin works on the nerves around the salivary glands to reduce the amount of saliva made. This should help to reduce your drooling.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Where are my salivary glands?

Most of your saliva comes from 4 main salivary glands around your mouth.

- You have 2 salivary glands behind your jaw. These are called parotid glands.
- You have 2 salivary glands below your jaw. These are called submandibular glands.

In this treatment we inject Botulinum toxin into your submandibular glands. For some patients we also inject the parotid glands.

Is botulinum toxin right for me?

Botulinum toxin injection is not suitable for you if you:

- are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- have an infection near the injection site.
- have a condition or disorder which causes general muscle weakness (like myasthenia gravis).
- are very unwell with an infection that is not under control.
- have widespread or general spasticity involving many parts of your body.

You may not be able to have botulinum toxin injections if you are taking blood thinning medication like warfarin, rivaroxaban or apixaban. The person who wanted you to have this treatment should talk to you about your risks and benefits if you are taking blood thinners.

How do I get ready for the appointment?

- **Please do not eat for 2 hours** before the appointment. This helps to reduce the risk of problems if you get any side effects.
- **You can drink clear fluids** up to the appointment time.
- **If you are on medicine** from your doctor please continue to take it as usual.
- Please wear clothing that is loose around the neck. If this is not possible, we may ask you to change into a hospital gown before your treatment. If you wear a necklace, please remove it before the treatment.

Who will be doing my treatment?

A doctor who specialises in ultrasound scans (a radiologist) will do the treatment. There may also be a radiology assistant in the room.

As we are a teaching hospital a student may also be in the room. If you do not want this, you can ask that a student is not in the room when you have your treatment.

What happens during the treatment?

- The treatment is usually done in an ultrasound scan room.

- The doctor doing your injection will talk to you about the risks and benefits of having a botulinum toxin injection of your salivary glands. You can ask any questions you may have.
- The doctor uses ultrasound scanning to find your salivary glands. The scan is done on the side of your face. This is to check if there is a safe area to inject into.
- The doctor puts a small needle into the skin over 1 salivary gland. This may hurt a little. They use ultrasound scanning to check the needle goes into the salivary gland.
- The doctor then injects botulinum toxin through the needle into the gland.
- The doctor will repeat the injection for each gland being treated.
- You will have about 50 to 100 units of botulinum toxin injected in total.
- The scan and treatment usually takes about 30 minutes.
- We would expect that you can go home straight after your appointment.

What to expect after the treatment

- You may not see any difference straight away.
- It can take up to 2 or 3 weeks for the treatment to work fully.
- The effects usually last 3 to 4 months before they wear off. They can last up to 6 months.
- Treatment can be repeated after 3 to 4 months.
- Avoid massaging or rubbing the treated areas for up to 48 hours. This is to avoid spreading the botulinum toxin to the surrounding area.
- Your referring team will arrange a follow up appointment. If you are taking medicines to treat drooling, such as hyoscine or glycopyrronium, the referrer may change these. This is to make sure your saliva does not get too thick.

Are there any side effects or risks?

Botulinum toxin injection is a very safe treatment but there are some risks:

Common side effects include:

- Pain or bruising at the injection sites
- Flu-like symptoms such as headache, fever and feeling tired. This usually lasts about 24 hours.
- Muscle weakness in the jaw. This may make chewing more difficult. This effect does not last long.

Other side effects include:

- Reaction at injection site including pain and collection of blood (haematoma formation). This is more likely if you are taking blood thinning medicine like warfarin.
- Infection
- Dry mouth, difficulty sleeping (insomnia), and joint pain.

Rare side effects:

- The treatment may not work. Your body can develop resistance (antibodies) to Botulinum toxin. This means that repeated injection treatments no longer work for you.

Very rare side effects:

- Difficulty swallowing. If this happens, food and drink from may go into your lungs (aspiration). We try to keep this risk as low as possible by using ultrasound scanning to check where these glands are. **You should seek urgent medical help if you think food or drink has gone into your lungs.**

When should I seek help?

You should call the your GP or the NHS Helpline on 111 for help if:

- The injection site looks red, swollen and feels hotter than the surrounding skin
- The injection site is oozing
- You have difficulty swallowing or chewing
- If you have a temperature more than 38°C

What if I need to talk to someone?

If you have any questions or concerns, or cannot make the appointment:

Please call the Radiology department on **0116 258 8765** and select **option 4**. Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, but not on bank holidays.



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