

Treating hemifacial spasm with Botox injections

Ophthalmology

Information for Patients

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What is hemifacial spasm?

Hemifacial spasm is a condition which causes spasms in the muscles around the eyelid that cannot be controlled by the person affected. It usually affects only one side of the face, causing spasms that last from a few seconds to several minutes.

What causes hemifacial spasm?

Some people with hemifacial spasm have had a facial palsy (Bell's palsy) in the past, where one side of the face becomes weak for a few weeks or months. As the nerve recovers it may become over-sensitive and cause spasms on and off. This can happen years later.

In a few people it is believed to be caused by squeezing (compression) of the nerves in the muscles of the face. Unusual blood vessels may be seen on brain scans, but in many patients no abnormality can be identified.

What are the signs of hemifacial spasm?

Hemifacial spasms may develop gradually, with muscle spasms affecting the muscles around one eye. These spasms sometimes spread to other muscles on the same side of the face (particularly the muscles of the jaw and mouth), and there may also be a clicking sound in the ear on that side.

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How is hemifacial spasm treated?

Treatment of hemifacial spasm involves injections of Botox (botulinum toxin) into the skin of the eyelids using a tiny needle. The injections help to relax the muscles around the eyes.

Some patients who have a scan showing an abnormally located blood vessel lying close to the facial nerve, may be sent to a neurosurgeon. The neurosurgeon may recommend an operation to provide a permanent cure for the problem.

What are the risks with botulinum toxin injections?

Botulinum toxin is a chemical produced by a bacteria called *Clostridium botulinum*, which in large amounts is poisonous. However, in the very small amounts injected, it can be used to weaken the muscles causing the spasm.

Botulinum toxin made for treatment purposes is prepared using a blood product (human albumin). The blood used is screened for all known transmissible infections. However, there is no absolute guarantee that the preparation is free from organisms which cannot be tested for, or have yet to be identified.

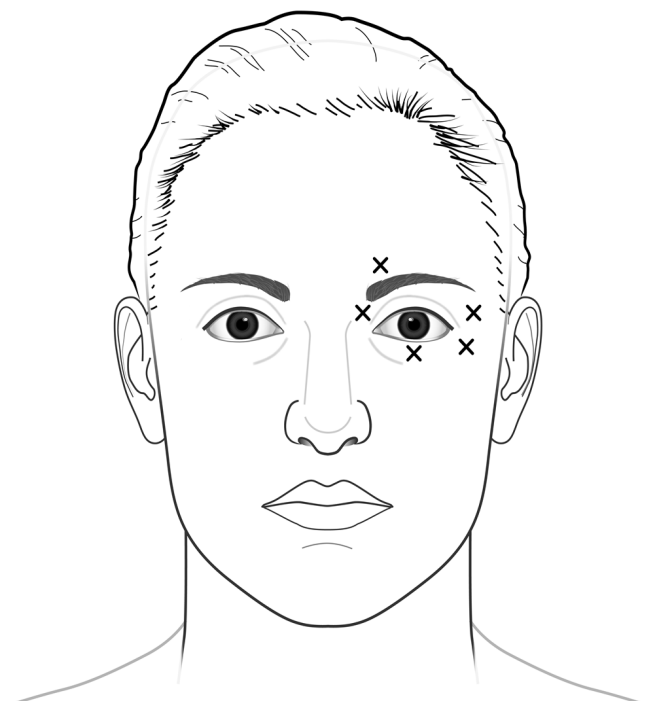
What do the injections involve and are there any side effects?

Most people have between 4 and 8 injections to the affected side. These are placed just under the skin of the eyelids and cheek and may cause a slight stinging.

The injection sites and dose will vary a little as it is tailored to each patient.

It is normal to feel some discomfort during, and for a while after the injections.

Small bruises can sometimes develop, but will go down quickly.



It is important not to rub the injection sites as this may spread the botulinum toxin beyond the affected area. Occasionally, other muscles may be affected resulting in a droopy eyelid or double vision. If this happens, it will get better over time as the effect of the injections wears off in about 2 to 3 months.

The injections will need to be repeated every 3 to 6 months, and sometimes changes to the site or dose of the injection may be needed.

Contact details

If you have any questions please ask at your appointment, or you can contact the Oculoplastic Team at Leicester Royal Infirmary on **0116 204 7971**.

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