

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. They cannot be controlled by the person affected. It usually affects only one side of the face. It causes spasms that last from a few seconds to a few minutes.

What causes hemifacial spasm?

Some people with hemifacial spasm have had a facial palsy (Bell's palsy) in the past. 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 found.

What are the signs of hemifacial spasm?

Hemifacial spasms may develop slowly, 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). There may also be a clicking sound in the ear on that side.

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How is hemifacial spasm treated?

We use injections of Botox (botulinum toxin) to treat the spasms.

We inject it into the skin of the eyelids using a tiny needle.

The injections help to relax the muscles around the eyes.

We sometimes use other preparations of botulinum toxin, but the risks and benefits are the same

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

What are the risks with botulinum toxin injections?

Botulinum toxin is a chemical made by a bacteria called Clostridium botulinum. In large amounts it is toxic, but, with the very small amounts we inject, 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. But there is no absolute guarantee that the preparation is free from organisms which cannot be tested for, or have yet to be identified.

There are also risk of droopy eyelids, double vision linked with Botox injection around the eye and facial drooping with facial doses. If this happens, it will get better over time as the effect of the injections wears off. This will happen in about 2 to 3 months.

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. It may cause a slight stinging.

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

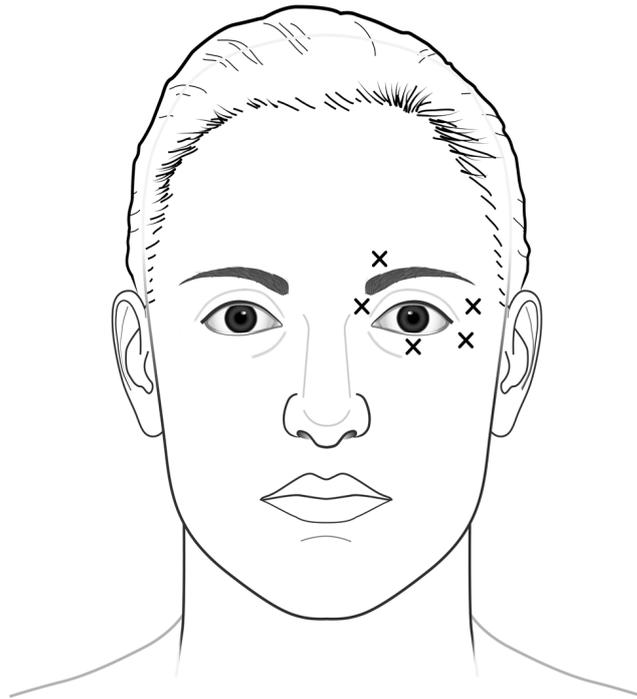
It is normal to feel some discomfort during, and for a while after the injections.

It is important not to rub the injection sites as this may spread the botulinum toxin beyond the affected area.

If you have a tendency to bruise easily, you may get bruise after the injection. It will go off in few days

Do not wear makeup on the day of injection.

The markings on the diagram below shows the common sites of injections.



What to expect after the procedure

You will not see any difference straight away after the Botox injections. It takes about 2 to 3 weeks for the full effect to be seen.

Do not rub or massage the treated area(s) for up to 48 hours, as this will move the Botox around. This will lessen the effect. It may increase the risk of double vision, droopy eyelid or droopy face.

We will arrange a follow-up phone appointment in 3 to 4 weeks after the first injection to check on your progress. The effect of the injection slowly wears off. Most people need repeated injections every 3 months.



Driving

You must tell DVLA about your condition. You usually cannot drive if the condition is severe and affects vision. You may be allowed to drive if the condition is mild. If the DVLA ask, we can write report confirming that your condition is controlled with Botulinum toxin injections

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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