

# Information for patients and carers

**Botulinum toxin treatment for squints  
(strabismus)**

**How is botulinum toxin used for  
squints.**

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue color, transitioning from a lighter blue at the top to a darker blue at the bottom.

## What is botulinum toxin?

Botulinum toxin (botox) works by temporarily paralysing or weakening muscles, by blocking the nerve to that muscle. Botox has been used to treat squints (strabismus) since the 1980s. Botox is injected into the muscle, usually under local anaesthetic. It is given under a short general anaesthetic in children, young teenagers, and adults who are unable to tolerate local anaesthetic.

## When is botulinum toxin used to treat squints?

- To treat squints that you struggle to control or are no longer able to control. This may prevent or delay the need for squint surgery
- To treat squints which are too small for squint surgery
- To assess the risk of double vision before squint surgery. By temporarily putting your eyes into a straighter position, we can see if you experience any double vision. This may change your surgical management
- If an eye muscle has been paralysed, botulinum toxin may help to prevent the opposite muscle from restricting further movement
- To treat squints that have been under or over corrected by squint surgery
- If you are unable to undergo general anaesthesia for squint surgery

## What will happen on the day?

- The orthoptist will begin by assessing your eye position and eye control on the day of your injection
- Before the procedure, local anaesthetic eye drops will be put into your eye to numb the area and make you more comfortable. You will then have electrode wires attached to your forehead and by the side of your eye with a small sticker. The electrodes will be attached to an

amplifier and speaker, which will allow the ophthalmologist to inject the muscle more accurately by listening to the electrical activity of the muscle being treated

- The ophthalmologist will ask you to lie back, keep your head still and look to one side, so that the needle can be placed into the muscle on the opposite side. You will then be asked to slowly look in the opposite direction, contracting the muscle and ensuring the correct place is injected. The needle is removed after 30 seconds to reduce the chance of the botulinum toxin leaking into the surrounding area
- You will be able to go home on the day once you are discharged

## What happens next?

Botulinum toxin can take between 24-48 hours to take effect and can last for up to 3 months. It may be used as a one-off procedure, but in some cases, it can be used as a repeated long-term treatment.

A follow-up will be arranged for you to see the orthoptist in 2 weeks following your injection.

## Are there any side effects?

- Temporary reversal of the direction of squint (the eye will straighten as it wears off)
- Temporary double vision (please note you are NOT allowed to drive with any double vision. Please contact the Orthoptic Department if you experience troublesome double vision)
- Temporary drooping of the eyelid on the side of the injection. This usually resolves within a couple of weeks
- The eye or eyelids may ache after the injection. This discomfort will ease with simple painkillers such as paracetamol
- Temporary swelling or bruising of the eye or eyelids

- There is a remote chance of damage to the eye or vision, but this is extremely uncommon

## Can the treatment affect my general health?

Allergic reactions are rare. The dose of botulinum toxin injected into the eye is very small and there is no risk to general health, even after repeated injections. There is no risk of botulism. There is no known risk to pregnant women.

**Should you need to seek medical advice following your botulinum toxin injection, please contact the ophthalmology triage nurse on telephone number: 01257 245346 (Monday to Friday between 9am to 4.30pm).**

**Should you require any medical assistance outside of these hours, please go to the Accident & Emergency (A&E) department.**

## Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact the Orthoptic team on telephone number: **01772 522417** (Monday to Friday between 8.30am to 4.40pm). If the Orthoptists are not available when you call, there is a 24-hour answerphone where you may leave a message.

Orthoptic Department:  
Broughton Suite (near the main entrance),  
Royal Preston Hospital,  
Sharoe Green Lane,  
Preston.  
PR2 9HT

## Sources of further information

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

[www.squintclinic.com](http://www.squintclinic.com)

[www.orthoptics.org.uk/patients-and-public/](http://www.orthoptics.org.uk/patients-and-public/)

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[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets)

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**Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.**

**This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.**

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**Division:** Surgery

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