Botox injections for Blepharospasm and Hemifacial spasm

Dystonia
Dystonia is an uncommon neurological movement disorder characterised by sustained and involuntary muscle contractions or muscle spasms. At least 70,000 people in the UK live with dystonia and the condition affects males and females of all ages. It is not a degenerative condition but is principally a problem caused by faulty signals from the brain to the muscles.

What is Blepharospasm?
Blepharospasm is a form of facial dystonia. It affects the muscles around the eyes, which may cause uncontrolled blinking, lid spasm or difficulty keeping the eyes open.

Who is affected by Blepharospasm?
Blepharospasm usually affects people between 50 and 70 years old, both male and female.

What are the signs of Blepharospasm?
Blepharospasm usually develops gradually. You may notice:

- Eye irritation
- Sensitivity to light
- Excessive blinking

These signs may vary in severity at different times of the day or from day to day. You may find your condition gets worse when you are:

- Tired
- Under stress
- Reading
- Looking at flickering lights
- Get smoke or wind in your eyes
- Do physical exercise

What causes Blepharospasm?
The cause of blepharospasm is not yet fully understood. It is thought to be linked to a chemical imbalance in the part of the brain that controls facial movement.

Will I always suffer with Blepharospasm?
You may experience increased blinking which develops into spasms, eye closure or problems opening your eyes. For a while it may improve or disappear completely. In many cases however, the problem returns after a period of time.

Is Blepharospasm likely to affect other parts of the body?
No, it is uncommon for Blepharospasm to effect other parts of the body.
Is there a cure for Blepharospasm?
Although there is no known cure for blepharospasm, there are a number of different treatments available including medication, surgery and Botox injections which may help the condition.

Hemifacial Spasm
Hemifacial spasm is a type of movement problem which causes the muscle on one side of the face to contract uncontrollably.

Who is affected by hemifacial spasm?
Male and females can both be affected and it is usually more common in middle-age.

What are the signs of Hemifacial spasm?
Hemifacial spasm develops gradually and you may notice:
- Muscle spasm around the eye
- The spasm may spread to the lower facial muscles on the same side often ‘drawing up’ the corner of the mouth.

Hemifacial spasm tends to worsen under stress and improves when you lie down.

What causes Hemifacial spasm?
Although not fully understood, it is thought that the condition is caused by irritation of the facial nerve between the brain and face.

Is there a cure for hemifacial spasm?
Rarely surgery can help but is not appropriate for many people. As with Blepharospasm, medication and Botox injections are the main option for treatment.

What is the substance used in a Botox Injection?
Botulinum toxin is produced naturally by the bacterium clostridium botulinum. It can be manufactured as a purified protein for safe clinical use.

Why is it used?
It is used to relax excessive muscle contraction when delivered in tiny controlled doses under the skin.

How long does it take work and how long does it last?
It usually starts to work after a few days from the injection and generally takes a week for the full effect. Any beneficial effect usually lasts for two to three months before wearing off. The botox treatment therefore needs repeating.

Complications
Many patients do not suffer any complications except occasional mild bruising. The commonest significant side effects are diplopia (double vision) or ptosis (upper lid droop). If experienced, these usually resolve spontaneously after a few weeks.
Patient Information

Sources of information
The Dystonia Society at - www.dystonia.org.uk
Helpline Number – Tel: 0845 4586322

The local Dystonia Society at: The Lexford Centre, Uckfield, East Sussex.

Important information
The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments
We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) – details below.

Hand hygiene
The rust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats
This information is available in alternative formats such as large print or electronically on request. Interpreters can also be booked. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offices, found in the main reception areas:

Conquest Hospital
Email: palsh@esht.nhs.uk - Telephone: 01424 758090

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After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference
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