

Botox Injections for Blepharospasm and Hemifacial spasm

If you have difficulty reading this leaflet, please ask us to send you a copy in a larger print size.

If your first language is not English, we can arrange for an interpreter to be available. Please let us know in advance if you require this service.

What is 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 have dystonia and the condition affects men and women 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. Although the eye lid twitching may start on one side, typically the condition eventually affects both eyes.

Who is affected by Blepharospasm?

Blepharospasm most commonly 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
- Exposed to wind or smoke
- Doing physical exercise

What are the causes of 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 you 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 any other part 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, simple measures are worth trying, including preservative-free dry eye drops (artificial tears), reducing caffeine intake, wearing sunglasses and attempting to lower stress levels where possible. There are also a number of different treatments available including medication, surgery and Botox injections.

What is 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?

Both men and women can 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. Most patients have an MRI head scan to rule out any other causes.

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 to work and how long does it last?

It usually starts to work after a few days from the Botox 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. Patients undergoing lower face injections for hemifacial spasm can experience a temporary drop in the corner of their mouth.

What if I have a problem?

If you need urgent advice about your eye(s), you can contact our Eye Emergencies telephone line on 0300 131 4500 extension 771744 (Mondays to Fridays between 09:00am and 5:00pm). Outside of these hours, call 0300 131 4500 and ask to speak to the on-call eye doctor.

Cancelling your appointment

If you need to cancel or change your appointment, please call the appointments line on **0300 131 4600**.

Consent (Giving your permission)

The staff caring for you may need to ask your permission to perform a particular treatment or investigation. You will be asked to sign a consent form that says you have agreed to the treatment and that you understand the benefits, risks and alternatives. If there is anything you don't understand or if you need more time to think about it, please tell the staff caring for you. Remember, it is your decision. You can change your mind at any time, even if you have signed the consent form. Let staff know immediately if you change your mind. Your wishes will be respected at all times.

Sources of information

The Dystonia Society (also known as Dystonia UK) at - www.dystonia.org.uk
Tel: 020 7793 3651

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 the Patient Experience Team – on 0300 131 4731 or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

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

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4434 - Email: esh-tr.accessibleinformation@nhs.net

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

Reference

Reviewed by: Paul Russell (Staff Nurse, Ophthalmology)

The following clinician(s) have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
Mr. Manuel Saldana (Consultant Ophthalmologist and Clinical Governance Lead for Ophthalmology Department), Mr. Michael Wearne (Consultant Ophthalmologist).

The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
Ophthalmology Department, Diagnostic, Anaesthetic and Surgery division (DAS)

Next Review Date: September 2025
Responsible Clinician/Author: Ophthalmology Department (ESHT)

© East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust - www.esht.nhs.uk