How can Botox help my bladder problems?

Botulinum Toxin (known widely as the brand name Botox) has been successful in treating overactive bladder symptoms which can cause urinary incontinence. An overactive bladder can be idiopathic (a condition of unknown cause) or can be caused by a neurological condition such as Stroke, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's Disease, spinal problems and others.

**BOTULINUM TOXIN IS NOT USED TO TREAT STRESS INCONTINENCE**

What is Botulinum Toxin?

The medication commonly called Botox (or Botulinum Toxin A) is a purified toxin made from bacterium. As such this is a toxic product but it has been used in a variety of medical conditions for many years very successfully. The first medical use was started in the 1960s and it was subsequently approved for use in the US in 1989. The first European approval was granted in 1992. More recently it has been found to be beneficial in patients suffering from overactive bladder. This treatment is not licensed in the United Kingdom for the use of overactive bladder but is increasingly used in specialist centres such as Musgrove Park Hospital to treat this condition.

How does it work?

Botulinum Toxin works by binding to the nerve endings of muscle, blocking the release of a chemical (acetylcholine) that causes the bladder muscles to contract involuntarily. When injected into specific muscles they become paralysed or weakened, but leaves surrounding muscle unaffected, allowing normal muscle function. This in turn prevents involuntary bladder contractions, with the intention of relieving your bladder symptoms which will typically include, frequency, urgency and sometimes incontinence of urine.

Why has Botulinum Toxin been recommended?

You will have already been diagnosed with an overactive bladder and have tried other treatments including avoiding caffeine, trying several antimuscarinic medications (bladder calming tablets or patches) and bladder training which has not helped you or was not well tolerated due to side effects. You must have tried these more established treatments before undergoing Botulinum Toxin injection into the bladder.

Are there any alternatives to Botulinum Toxin?

The alternatives to Botulinum Toxin are medications or bladder training, these will have been unsuccessful or not tolerated if you have been offered Botox.

There are other more complex procedures such as neuromodulation or open surgery (Clam Cystoplasty) which may be recommended in some cases.

- Neuromodulation or sacral nerve modulation uses continuous stimulation and close nerve contact. This requires surgical implantation of a pulse generator and electrode. The aim of this is to relieve bladder symptoms by rebalancing voiding control. This type of treatment is currently only available in specialist centres.

- Clam Cystoplasty is a major operation, it involves cutting open the bladder, like a clam and sewing a patch of intestine between the two halves. The aim of the surgery is to increase bladder capacity and reduce the overactivity.

What does the procedure involve?

You will have attended an appointment for the Pre Operative Assessment Unit. You will come into the Day Surgery Centre on the day of the procedure. It is performed under a general anaesthetic. The treatment is carried out using a special telescope (cystoscope) which is introduced through the urethra (waterpipe) which means no surgical incision is required and the bladder is injected into 20-30 sites. The procedure takes approximately 30 minutes. You will be discharged home after you have recovered and passed urine.
Are there any side effects?

The use of Botulinum Toxin is safe but some patients do suffer from the following side effects:

- Urinary retention (inability to pass urine) – you may be taught a technique called Intermittent Self Catheterisation (ISC) prior to the procedure which involves passing a small catheter tube into your bladder to empty it so that if you experience problems with urinary retention you will know how to deal with it. This problem usually only lasts for a few weeks but in some cases can last longer.
- Urinary Tract Infection.
- Slight haematuria (blood in the urine)
- Botox is a Toxin and there is theoretical risk of causing various muscle weaknesses
- Flu like symptoms

How long will the benefits last?

The effects of the treatment are seen 7 to 21 days after the injection is given and it normally lasts between 6 to 12 months. You may need a repeat treatment if your problem remains persistent

Who can I contact for more help or information?

For further information on the internet, here are some useful sites to explore:

Best Health (prepared by the British Medical Association)
Patient UK
Royal College of Surgeons

If you have any queries before or after this procedure please contact:

Urology and Continence Nurse Specialists in the Surgical Investigations Unit
Surgical Investigations Unit
Musgrove Park Hospital
Taunton
01823 342111

Botulinum Toxin (Botox) treatment for overactive bladder symptoms