General notes
This information sheet gives a general overview of botulinum toxin injections for treatment of spasticity, but does not cover all situations. If you have any questions after reading this information, please speak to the doctor or physiotherapist.

Contact details
If you have any further questions, please contact the Rehabilitation Medicine Team 01823 342139 or the Physiotherapy team 01823 344968.

Spasticity specialist team:
Mrs H Wilkinson, Clinical Specialist Physiotherapy
Dr I Hai, Associate Specialist in Rehabilitation Medicine

Further information
Botulinum Toxin injection for treatment of spasticity in adults

You have been referred for an assessment of your muscle tightness (spasticity), and a Botulinum Toxin injection may be required for its treatment.

What is Botulinum Toxin?

Botulinum Toxin is a chemical produced by the bacteria clostridium botulinum. It has been developed for medical use to relax overactive muscles.

How does Botulinum Toxin work?

It blocks the release of a chemical at the junction of the nerve and the muscle, causing a reduction in muscle contraction and tightness.

What are the possible benefits?

It can help with relief of pain and frequency of muscle spasm. It may also improve the use of the arms or legs if muscle tightness is affecting their function. The specific goals of your treatment will be discussed with you before your injection. The benefit cannot be guaranteed and the effect of the injection is temporary, lasting approximately three months.

What are the possible side effects?

Serious side effects are rare. Mild side effects can occur and are normally self-limiting.

Side effects can include:

Common: flu-like illness; pain, bleeding, burning or irritation at the injection site

Rare or very rare: serious and immediate hypersensitivity reaction; difficulty in swallowing; fits

What are the conditions in which the injection cannot be given?

Botulinum Toxin should not be used during pregnancy or if you have a generalised muscle disease such as myasthenia gravis. The injection cannot be given if there is an infection at the site or you have an active infection.

Before your procedure

You will be assessed to check if the injection is suitable for you. The specific goals of your treatment will be discussed and agreed. We need to check what medication you are taking. We will need your consent to proceed with the injection before giving it to you.

Who will perform my procedure?

The injection will be done by an appropriately trained doctor or physiotherapist.

What happens during the procedure?

The toxin will be injected directly into the identified muscle, usually at multiple sites. This procedure does not usually require an anaesthetic. We may use a special machine to identify the muscles for injection.

What happens after the procedure?

It may be necessary to give you some exercises to carry out at home. You can leave hospital after the procedure and resume normal activities unless specifically instructed otherwise by the doctor, physiotherapist or a nurse.

The toxin does not work immediately and can take up to two weeks to take effect.

You may be given appointments to see other healthcare professionals as part of your treatment.

You may need a follow up review or further injections and this will be discussed with you at your appointment.

What are the alternatives to Botulinum Toxin injection treatment?

Stretching of the tight muscles, use of medication or an injection given into the nerve which controls the tight muscles can be done instead of or in combination with Botulinum Toxin injection. You can discuss this with the doctor or physiotherapist at your appointment.