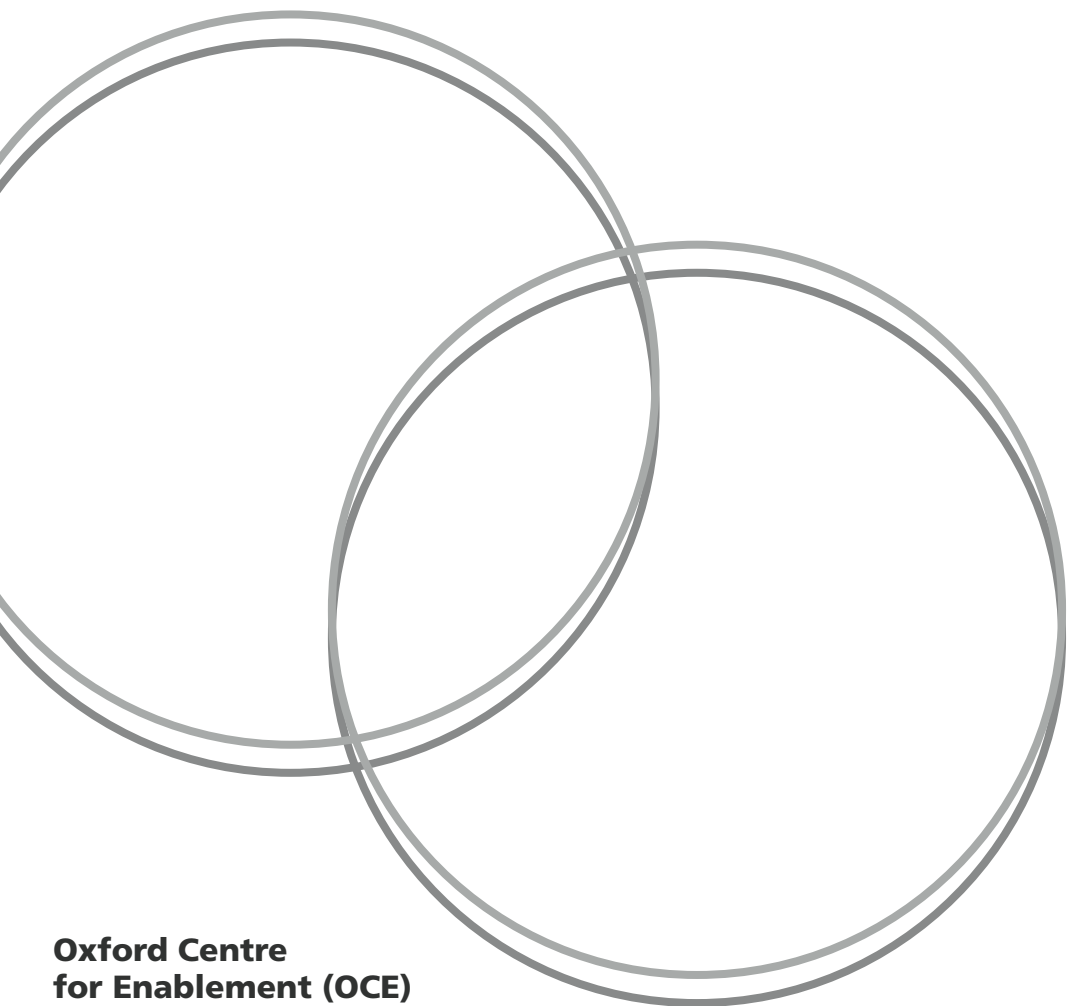




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Botulinum toxin injections for spasticity

Information for patients



Oxford Centre
for Enablement (OCE)

Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for people who may have botulinum toxin injections to treat their spasticity.

What is spasticity?

Spasticity can happen after the brain or the nerves in your spine are damaged. Your muscles can tighten when you do not need them to and become stiff. This is spasticity. Sometimes this stiffness in a muscle can help a person to do something. If it is normally difficult for a person to stand up, spasticity can make their legs feel stronger. But it can sometimes lead to problems such as pain or difficulties with daily tasks. If spasticity carries on for a long time, it can reduce the amount a muscle is able to move.

What are botulinum toxin injections?

Toxins are substances made by living things. Botulinum toxin is made by germs called bacteria. Botulinum can harm people but it has also been used in medicine for many years. It is a safe treatment for spasticity. The toxin is injected into a muscle. Here it blocks the link between the muscle and the nerves which tell the muscle to tighten. This makes that muscle relax for a period of time. This kind of injection is only done when there are serious problems with muscle over-activity.

What are the aims of botulinum toxin injections?

Botulinum toxin injections help to reduce the stiffness in your muscles. The injections may help:

- you to take care of yourself
- you to carry out normal activities
- to reduce pain
- to make physical treatments, like exercise and stretch, work better.

What are the alternatives to botulinum toxin injections?

- Physical management strategies such as exercise, stretching or splinting may be effective on their own.
- Medications in tablet form are sometimes suitable.
- Other procedures or surgical treatments can also be considered.

What are the effects of botulinum toxin injections?

Botulinum toxin reduces the stiffness in the muscles that are injected.

How long do the effects last?

You will not feel any difference straight away. The effects of botulinum toxin injections come on gradually. They will be strongest between 2 and 6 weeks. They usually last for about 3 to 4 months and wear off gradually.

How will it be given?

Botulinum Toxin is injected into the muscle. This is done by a doctor or physiotherapist with special training. We may use ultrasound, to guide the injection. This is a simple and painless way of looking into the body.

Are there side effects from botulinum toxin injections?

Reported side effects, that may affect up to 1 in 100 people include;

- Dry mouth.
- Pain in the injected muscle.
- Flu-like symptoms. These usually pass after a few days and do not need any treatment.
- Excessive or unwanted muscle weakness. Sometimes the botulinum toxin injections can weaken the muscle too much. This can make the muscle too floppy or make it difficult to carry out normal activities. This effect will also wear off after 3 to 4 months.

Serious complications have been reported to include:

- Swallowing problems. This may occur due to relaxation of the swallowing muscles, which can be far away from the injection site. (This may affect up to 1 in 100 people)
- Anaphylaxis due to a severe allergic reaction to the medication. This may include difficulty breathing, hives or swelling of the soft tissue.

Please get emergency medical help straight away if you find it hard to swallow or breathe after the injection.

Botulinum toxin and blood thinning medicine

If you are taking warfarin, your INR needs to be in the therapeutic range (usually 2 to 3). Please make sure you have your INR checked no longer than one week before the appointment by contacting your GP surgery. You should bring the result to your spasticity appointment

If you are taking any other blood thinning medicine, for example rivaroxaban, apixaban or dabigatran, please do not stop using these.

Botulinum toxin and pregnancy

If you are pregnant, breastfeeding or think you may become pregnant, please tell the team, as you will not be suitable for this treatment, so an alternative treatment will be considered.

Is there anything I should look out for when I go home?

Please monitor the effects of the injections and note any side effects.

Please get medical help straight away if:

- you find it hard to swallow or breathe
- you are bleeding heavily
- you have very painful bruises.

Please speak to the clinical team if you are worried about the injections or other treatments, or if you would like to talk about the information in this leaflet.

Contact details

For more information and advice **during working hours** call the Spasticity Team on: **01865 737 451**

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
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