



Onabotulinum A (Botox) for the prevention of Chronic Migraine

General principles

Onabotulinum A (Botox) is licensed for the treatment of chronic migraine, defined as 3 months of at least 15 days of headache a month, of which at least 8 days have migrainous features, such as nausea, light or noise sensitivity, pulsating or lateralised pain.

While other versions of botulinum toxin exist, they have not been formally tested in migraine and the potency differs between products.

Acute treatment on more than 2 days per week is associated with medication overuse, renders preventative treatment less effective. It is therefore important to address this issue when considering a preventative treatment.

Introduction to the use of Onabotulinum A (Botox) as a chronic migraine preventative

The aim of this leaflet is to provide brief overview on the use of Onabotulinum A (Botox) for the prevention of migraine. The 'patient information' leaflet supplied with the treatment provides more a comprehensive overview.

Other useful sources of information include:

- <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/>

What is Onabotulinum A (Botox)?

Onabotulinum A (Botox) has been shown to be effective in chronic migraine. It is also used to treat certain problems of muscular spasticity and is used for cosmetic purposes.



How is Onabotulinum A (Botox) used in chronic migraine?

The treatment is given as a series of 31 to 39 tiny (0.1 ml) injections under the skin or into the muscles in and around the head of the forehead, above the ears, and into the neck and shoulders. The injections are repeated at 12 weeks.

What is the likelihood of benefit with Onabotulinum A (Botox) for chronic migraine

About one in four people respond well to the first or second set of injections, and half need more than two sets of injections to get a good response. Studies show that 47% of patients had a 50% or greater reduction in the number of days with headache, with a significant benefit on measures of quality of life.

The biological effect of botulinum toxin on nerves takes several days or a few weeks to work. Some patients do not start to improve until after their second set of injections which is given 12 weeks after the first set of injections.

Who cannot take Onabotulinum A (Botox)?

Onabotulinum A (Botox) is only licensed for chronic migraine: not any other sort of migraine.

People who are pregnant or breastfeeding may not have Onabotulinum A (Botox).

The best use of medicines in pregnancy (BUMPS) website may also be a useful reference.

<http://www.medicinesinpregnancy.org/Medicine--pregnancy/>



Does Onabotulinum A (Botox) have any side effects?

If you have other neurological disease, for example Bell's palsy, a neuropathy, or Myasthenia Gravis, the risks of Botox are increased.

If you have recently (within the last 3 months) had cosmetic botulinum toxin then the side effects could be increased.

If a person is at risk of angle closure glaucoma caution will need to be exercised by the doctor in considering using this treatment

The injections are slightly prickly or stinging and take about 5-10 minutes to complete.

It is possible, though rare, to have an acute allergic response so you should stay in the clinic for several minutes after the first set of injections. If you have any difficulty in breathing, swallowing or speaking after receiving Botox contact a doctor immediately.

Less than one in ten patients experience the following side effects:

- Worsening migraine. This can begin within a day or two of the injections, usually lasts a few days
- Rash, itching
- As with all injections; pain, bruising, bleeding or infection where the injection was given are a possibility
- Drooping of eyebrows or eye lids. This begins after a couple or a few weeks and usually can last for a few weeks.
- Muscle weakness, pain, cramp, stiffness or tightness
- Weakness and pain in the neck. This begins after a couple or a few weeks and can last for a few weeks.

Less than 1 in 100 experience:

- Difficulty in swallowing
- Skin pain
- Jaw pain
- Swollen eyelid