



YOU HAVE BEEN PRESCRIBED BOTULINUM TOXIN AS PART OF YOUR STROKE TREATMENT.

HERE ARE SOME COMMON QUESTIONS WE RECEIVE ON BOTULINUM INJECTION TREATMENT:

WHAT IS SPASTICITY?

Spasticity is the medical term for when muscles are contracting, flexing or are tense on their own without the patient meaning to. This leads to stiffness and muscle pain. Untreated this can affect common activities such as eating, grooming, walking and limit effective hygiene.

WHAT CAUSES FOCAL SPASTICITY?

Spasticity is quite common among stroke survivors. Each year in Canada about 50 000 people suffer from strokes. Spasticity can also be caused by cerebral palsy, acquired brain injury, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury or other nervous system disorder.

Essentially, the messages from the brain telling the muscles to relax are not received successfully in spasticity.

HOW DOES BOTOX / XEOMIN WORK?

Quite simply, for someone with focal spasticity, their brain is sending messages to continually contract (tighten) a muscle. Injection of botulinum toxin right into the affected muscle interrupts those messages from the brain allowing the muscle to relax.

HOW LONG HAS BOTOX BEEN ON THE MARKET IN CANADA?

Health Canada approved the first Botulinum toxin BOTOX in 1992. This prescription treatment should be administered by a physician specially trained to give you the lowest effective dose. Typically in spasticity, these injections are given by a physiatrist (rehab physician) or neurologist.



WHO SHOULD NOT GET BOTULINUM TOXIN INJECTIONS?

Patients with rare muscle disorders such as myasthenia gravis, Eaton Lambert syndrome , amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gehrig's disease. Your physician would likely have screened you for these disorders before recommending this treatment.

We do advise that you let your doctor know if you are currently taking a blood thinner known as warfarin or Coumadin or if you have a blood disorder that affects your clotting. Also, if you are taking the antibiotic tetracycline or other aminoglycoside.

Your treatment will not likely be interrupted, however it is beneficial for your doctor to be aware before injecting.

WHAT SIDE EFFECTS CAN I EXPECT?

Botulinum toxin injections are generally well tolerated. The medicine is pH neutral so does not burn or irritate the skin. However, you may find that you have some soreness at the injection sites. You may have received several needles causing some pain, tenderness or even bruising at these areas. You may also feel some overall weakness. Speak to our pharmacist if you are having any concerns about how you are feeling after the injections.

Seek medical attention if you are having trouble swallowing or breathing as a result of this treatment.

HOW SOON WILL I FEEL THE EFFECT?

Many report the medication working after a few days. The effect should be noticeable by 2 weeks.

WILL THIS INTERACT WITH MY OTHER MEDICATION?

No. There are no known drug interactions although in theory the antibiotic tetracycline or other aminoglycosides may interfere with botulinum toxin and should be avoided.

HOW LONG WILL THE EFFECT LAST?

Typically, patients feel the effect wearing off between 3 and 4 months although some patients report the effect lasting much longer. Generally, we see patients receiving injection treatments 3 or 4 times per year usually after 12 weeks.

IS THERE ANYTHING I SHOULD AVOID THE DAY OF THESE INJECTIONS?



Although there is some debate about this, try to avoid applying heat to the injected areas for a few hours afterwards. This would refer to heating pads, hot gel packs, Jacuzzi tubs.

IS THE MEDICATION BOTULINUM TREATMENT COVERED UNDER OHIP?

If you are on the government prescription plan in Ontario (known as ODB), the government will cover this medication once your doctor has completed some paperwork confirming the diagnosis of “focal spasticity”.

If you are covered under private insurance, our staff can help complete the forms required for this medicine to be covered under your plan.

If you do not have any prescription coverage, our staff can discuss your options for assistance with the cost.

WHAT ROLE DOES THERAPY PLAY AFTER BOTULINUM INJECTIONS?

Physical therapy is an important part of your treatment to improve range of motion and to meet your specific goals. This often involves stretching exercises and how to move the body without causing injury or pain. Occupational therapists may be involved to train you on new skills for day to day living. This may include strategies on how to walk, bath and dress or eat meals.

Our favourite websites on spasticity:

www.wemove.org

www.strokesurvivors.ca

www.dystoniacanada.org

www.stroke.org