Botox treatment for overactive bladder

Patient information

What is botulinum toxin A (botox)?
Botox isn’t just for frowns! Botulinum toxin A, commonly known as botox, can be used for treatment of urinary problems. Botox is a natural, purified protein which has the ability to relax muscles.

How does it work?
Botox has been used to treat urinary incontinence for many years. Botox works on the bladder nerves to relax the bladder.

This helps to reduce:
• bladder contractions (spasms)
• the occurrence of urine leakage
• the feeling of needing to go to the toilet very suddenly
• how often you feel the need to pass urine.

Before your treatment
Before recommending botox your doctor will have carried out a number of tests to check that it is a suitable treatment for you. You may be a candidate for botox if you have an overactive bladder and have tried treatments such as pelvic floor exercises and medications without success, or if you have neurogenic detrusor overactivity.

Botox is not effective for the treatment of another common type of urine leakage called stress incontinence (leakage with cough, sneeze, and exercise).

How is botox administered?
The treatment is very simple and is usually performed as a day stay procedure at clinic or hospital. Botox needs to be injected into the muscle of the bladder. To put botox into your bladder your doctor will use a cystoscope. This is a fine tube, containing a tiny camera that enables doctors to see inside the bladder.

Your doctor will inject tiny amounts of botox into the muscle of your bladder. The whole procedure should be over in about 30 minutes. Most patients tolerate this procedure well. It should not be painful. Following the treatment your bladder is emptied and you will be discharged home.
Care at home
It is advisable to drink a little extra fluid for a couple of days to reduce the risk of urinary tract infection. Your doctor may also give you a dose or short course of antibiotics to take following treatment.

You may experience some stinging or burning while passing urine for the first few times after treatment. Your urine may also be a little blood stained. This is normal and will clear over 24 to 48 hours.

- Remember to empty your bladder efficiently, sit comfortably on the toilet, feet flat on the floor and lean forward with your elbows on your knees
- For some you may feel like your bladder hasn’t completely emptied, double-voiding may be useful. This is where you empty your bladder, and then wait for a few moments, relax and empty it again.

How quickly does botox work and how long does it last?
Botox does not work immediately but begins to work over several days to two weeks. You should begin to experience relief of sudden urges to urinate, and a reduction in urine leakage or stop leaking altogether.

Botox is not permanent and will last about six to eight months in the bladder. For some women, a single treatment is all that is required: others need repeated treatments.

What are the risks of botox treatment?
Sometimes urinary retention occurs (inability or difficulty to empty your bladder). In other words the botox works too well and patients cannot urinate on their own, or they have some residual urine in their bladder that does not pass with normal urination. This complication is rare in patients with overactive bladder because the doctor limits the amount of botox injected.

However, there is a small risk of you requiring to self catheterise (pass a tube/catheter in to the bladder yourself a few times a day) to empty the bladder.

This complication can last for a few months until the botox wears off. If you find you are having trouble with passing urine please contact the clinic/emergency department immediately.

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