

Botox® Therapy Information Sheet

The aim of this information sheet is to ensure that you understand the nature of the treatment you wish to undertake. Please read it carefully and discuss any queries with your practitioner.

What is botulinum toxin?

Botulinum toxin is a chemical produced by the botulinum bacterium. Botox® is a protein derivative of the toxin, which, when injected into the muscle, causes it to become weakened or inactivated. It stops the muscle from functioning by blocking neuromuscular transmission – i.e. it stops the chemical messages from the nerve to the muscle.

How does Botox® therapy work?

By using facial muscles repeatedly throughout a lifetime, the skin becomes creased in the areas used most. The ageing process causes collagen and elastin production in the skin to slow down so that, as we get older, these areas of over-use become damaged and the lines become permanent. By reducing the movement of muscles in these areas, the skin stops being creased and is allowed to recover, causing the lines to soften or even fade away. In the areas treated, the muscles are temporarily (always reversibly) inactivated, during which time the patient can break the subconscious habit of overusing these muscles. Depending on each individual and the dose used, the response to treatment can vary from a relaxation of the muscles to an inability to move them.

For the first couple of years, frequent treatments are required to 're-educate' the facial muscles. Thereafter, treatments would be less frequent until a yearly maintenance treatment is normally all that is required.

How long has Botox® been in use?

As long ago as 1978, Botox® was used as a treatment for patients with eye squints by weakening the over-active eye muscle. Since then, it has been used in a variety of therapeutic areas such as spasmodic neck, writer's cramp, tics, multiple sclerosis, facial spasm, Parkinson's Disease and cerebral palsy, to name but a few. In more recent times the use of Botox® for cosmetic therapy has become more widespread.

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