

Botulinum toxin injections for hyperhidrosis

This leaflet explains the use of botulinum toxin for hyperhidrosis, including the benefits, risks and any alternatives. It also tells you what you can expect when you come for your treatment. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact a member of our team who will be happy to assist.

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What is botulinum toxin type A (Botox®)?

Botulinum toxin type A is a natural protein that is made by a specific bacterium called *Clostridium botulinum*. The protein is removed from the bacteria and then specially prepared before use. Botox® has been available for over 20 years and is now used widely to treat a variety of medical problems, such as hyperhidrosis.

How does Botox® work?

The use of Botox® is a licenced treatment for excessive sweating from the armpits, known as axillary hyperhidrosis. The toxin works by blocking the nerve that is responsible for activating the sweat glands, it does this by stopping the release of a chemical called acetylcholine. This results in the reduction of sweating. It works in the body for around four to six months and then the effects wear off.

How effective is the treatment?

The treatment is effective at reducing sweating for most people with axillary hyperhidrosis. The effects of the Botox® should be evident within five to ten days after the treatment. However 5-10% (between 1 in 20 and 1 in 10) of patients report no improvement. It may not be an appropriate treatment for you if you have excessive sweating in other areas of the body in addition to your armpits. You will therefore be assessed by a member of the clinical team before being offered treatment. Treatment results are expected to last four to six months.

When the Botox® wears off, your condition will return to its previous state – it will not worsen and there is no permanent effect.

What are the risks and side effects?

Generally, treatment with Botox® is well tolerated but, as with all medicine, there is a risk of side effects. Your doctor or surgical nurse performing the procedure will discuss these with you. You are encouraged to ask any questions or raise any concerns.

We have clear, internationally agreed guidelines on the maximum dose we can use, as well as on a total dose, to minimise any risks or side effects.

All treatments have risks and side effects but not everyone will experience them. Usually side effects occur in the first few days after treatment and will disappear within a few days.

Common side effects include:

- Temporary pain where the injections have been given.
- Some bumps appearing where the injections have been given. These will disappear within a few hours.
- Bruising, swelling and/or redness at the site of the injections.
- Some people experience flu-like symptoms or experience a tiredness or heaviness in the arms which usually resolves within a few days.
- There is a small risk of a skin infection.

Some people also experience compensatory sweating, which is when the armpits successfully stop sweating but other areas of the body sweat more. It is not possible to predict if this will happen to you or where on your body this might occur. This will stop as the Botox® wears off.

Rarely, allergic reactions can occur. If you have any symptoms of a severe allergic reaction, please report to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E) or call 999 for an ambulance.

Can I continue to take my current medication?

During your consultation we will ask you about any medicines you are taking. You should let us know if you are on any blood-thinning medication, particularly any antiplatelet medicines such as aspirin or clopidogrel, or anticoagulant medicines such as warfarin or rivaroxaban. Do not stop taking your medication unless advised to do so by your doctor or nurse.

If you suspect that you may have had an allergic reaction to Botox® previously, please inform a member of the team before your treatment.

We will ask about any current medical conditions, notably if you have any neuromuscular disorders or blood clotting disorders.

Who should NOT be treated with Botox®?

You should **not** receive treatment with Botox® if:

- You have had an allergic reaction to botulinum toxin type A in the past.
- You have an infection in or around any of the areas to be injected.
- You have a febrile illness (a fever).
- You are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- You are a Jehovah's Witness.
- You have a medical condition that may interfere with neuromuscular function, such as myasthenia gravis, Eaton-Lambert syndrome or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

Consent - asking for your consent

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves. If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

What happens during the procedure?

You will have your treatment in the Dermatological Surgery and Laser Unit (DSLNU). You will have a discussion with a member of the clinical team and you will be asked to sign a consent form before the procedure begins. You will have the opportunity to ask questions.

The areas that require treatment will be cleaned and marked with a surgical marker. The exact number of injections needed varies from person to person, but on average 25 to 30 small injections of Botox® per armpit are administered a few centimetres apart. A trained doctor or surgical nurse will administer these injections. Some discomfort is normal. The whole procedure usually takes around 30 minutes.

What happens after the treatment?

It is important that you follow the nurse or doctor's care advice after you have received Botox® treatment. You will be able to leave the department after this.

You should keep the area clean and try not to rub the injection sites for the first 24 hours as this may affect how well the treatment works. Avoid any exposure to extreme heat and avoid any exercise for 48 hours after the treatment.

You will be offered **three** treatments only (as a trial). We will book your appointments four to six months apart. If your Botox® treatment is still effective when your next appointment is due, please call the department to reschedule your appointment for a later date. If you do not attend your appointment without prior notice then we will discharge you back to your GP. After your three treatments, you will be discharged back to the care of your GP.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about this treatment, please contact the **Dermatological Surgery and Laser Unit**, **t: 020 7188 6284** (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm).

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:**
complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111 **w:** 111.nhs.uk

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