



BOTULINUM TOXIN FOR SCARS PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

What is botulinum toxin?

Botulinum toxin is a synthetic version of a chemical that is produced by certain bacteria. It is modified to make it harmless while still maintaining its key effect of blocking the signals from nerves. It comes in a variety of different forms. The Scar Team use the most well established form of botulinum toxin that is called Botox®.

How is it carried out?

Usually, the procedure is carried out under local anaesthetic within the clinic or occasionally, theatre. An itchy scar is first cleaned with antiseptic and then anaesthetic injections are placed around the scar to numb the skin. Only when the scar is completely anaesthetised, a number of small injections of botulinum toxin are made into the depths of the scar.

How does it work?

The botulinum toxin blocks the signalling of nerves. These nerves are thought to be stimulated when an area of the skin – such as a scar – is inflamed and itchy. Also, the drug may act to calm down the cells which release one of the key chemicals involved in itch: histamine.

What are the benefits?

The injections take up to one week to work. Usually, there is a great improvement in itch and often when other techniques have failed. This seems to break the cycle of repetitive scratching which may accentuate the symptoms of itch and allow the skin to repair.

What are the risks of the procedure?

Unusually, the injections work only minimally or not at all. Sometimes most of the scar itch improves but one area becomes increasingly itchy. The botulinum toxin's effect wears off after 3-6 months and may need to be repeated. Rarely, the drug can alter the sensation in the surrounding skin or cause weakness of muscles. Infections are rare.

Who cannot have the procedure?

If you have any allergies to botulinum toxin or the constituents of the formulation, you cannot undergo this treatment. The same is true if you have any muscle weakness conditions such as myasthenia gravis. If you are pregnant or lactating, botulinum toxin must not be given as there is a theoretical risk of the drug passing to the baby. You cannot have the treatment if you are on certain antibiotics (aminoglycosides).

How do I prepare for the procedure?

The procedure can be carried out as a day case and no special preparation is required.



What can I expect afterwards?

There may be some pinpoint areas of bleeding which stop within a few minutes. The area may feel tender and be slightly red for a couple of days. There may be no noticeable change in symptoms of itch for up to one week.

What do I do afterwards?

You can carry on with all of your normal daily activities. There is no need to modify work or recreation.

What dressings will I need?

Often, no dressing is required but instead, simple cream is applied to the area for a day or two.

What if I want any more information?

The team can be contacted at any time for more information. Please ring 0117 906 4872 or email info@scarteam.co.uk