

RUH Botox for Bladders

What is Botox (Botulinum toxin)?

The treatment is called Botulinum Toxin A. You may have heard of this drug under the brand name BOTOX®. It is often used as a beauty treatment to get rid of wrinkles or to stop people sweating, but it can also be used medically to treat muscle disorders, including muscle twitching.

It can be effective for overactive bladders (inappropriate bladder contractions).

Why do I need it?

It is a treatment for an overactive bladder. This means you may be experiencing some or all of the following:

- Passing urine more frequently than normal
- Have a strong urge to pass urine that you cannot put off
- Urinary leakage when you cannot get to the toilet quickly enough
- Getting up to pass urine more than once through the night.

If other forms of treatment, for example, bladder retraining, diet and fluid advice or medication have not helped your bladder problem, you may be offered Botox.

What are the benefits of Botox injections?

The injection paralyses part of the bladder muscle, which means that the bladder becomes more relaxed and stretchy so that you should be able to hold on longer before feeling the need to empty your bladder. This should help to reduce your episodes of urgency and urge incontinence.

What will happen to me when I have Botox injections?

A local anaesthetic gel is put into your urethra (the tube that carries urine from the bladder) a few minutes before the procedure.

A thin tube called a cystoscope is inserted into your urethra and on into your bladder, and this is attached to a camera so that pictures are displayed on a TV screen. Small injections are then made into the wall of the bladder in about 10 places.

After the treatment, we will make sure you have passed urine without any problems and check that you feel up to going home.

A few days after the treatment, we will need to see if you have any problems, especially with emptying your bladder. You may be seen in clinic or we may do this by telephone.

You may need to have a scan of your bladder to check that it empties.

We will check on your progress six weeks after the treatment. Often you will need future treatments to maintain the improvement.

How soon will I see results?

The effects of Botulinum Toxin usually start 1-7 days after the injection. The effect can last between 6-12 months; it cannot be reversed but will gradually wear off with time. Because the effects cannot be reversed, you should be certain you want the procedure to be done.

Many people with overactive bladders need repeated injections. Botox has been used for at least 20 years in the treatment of other muscle problems, but has only been used in the last 10-12 years in the bladder.

As it is a relatively new treatment, we do not yet know enough about the long-term effects of repeated treatments.

How successful are Botox injections?

60-80% of women (60-80 out of 100) see an improvement in bladder symptoms.

Will there be any side effects?

Up to one in six may have difficulty emptying their bladder. If you have that kind of difficulty, our nurses can give you advice and treatment. You may get bladder catheters to use. These are disposable tubes the size of a piece of spaghetti.

You use one to empty your bladder then throw it away. You may need to use two or three a day. No tube stays in your bladder, so you don't have to wear a bag.

One person in ten might get cystitis, a urine infection, in the first few days after the treatment. This should get better with antibiotics.

Other side effects are rare. They include a flu-like illness, aching muscles and a feeling of nausea.