

INFORMATION SHEET 2

The JCCP is committed to raising public awareness of the risks associated with various non-surgical and hair restoration treatments. As part of this process the JCCP will publish regular ‘Information Sheets’ in key areas.

Botulinum Toxins

As a patient you probably know botulinum toxins through a brand name – Botox®. However, there are 3 brands which are licensed in the UK for cosmetic purposes. They are Azzalure®, Bocouture® and Botox®. You may see other brands – Dysport® and Xeomin® - but these are licensed for non-cosmetic purposes. Botulinum toxins are legally classified as prescription only medicines (POM), and this imposes important restrictions.

All botulinum toxins are injected with the aim of targeting a specific muscle. The effect is to limit the movement of that muscle, leading to specific effects and potential side-effects.

Procedure

Your practitioner will explain details of the full procedure to you.

They will identify the muscles causing the offending lines, or otherwise required to achieve the desired effects, and target these with a prescribed dose of botulinum toxin, using multiple injections with a very fine needle. You may find that the injection points are not where you would imagine, since your practitioner is targeting the muscles, not the lines.

Botulinum toxins take several days to begin working, and up to 2 weeks to be fully effective. Your practitioner may wish to see you after 2 weeks to assess results and modify where necessary.

Aftercare requirements will be fully explained to you.

Effects/Benefits

In cosmetic medicine, botulinum toxins are used to treat lines caused by the movement of muscles – expression lines. Lines that are present only on the action of expression, will improve by limiting that expression. Lines that remain when expression is relaxed, may soften but may not resolve completely.

Careful targeting of muscles can also be used to take advantage of another effect of botulinum toxins – lifting, most commonly of the eyebrows.

Judicious use of botulinum toxins can achieve a softening of lines, gentle lifting and moderation (but not inhibition) of expression to achieve natural results and patients report a ‘fresher’ more ‘awake’ look.

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Results typically last 3 to 4 months.

Side-effects

This list of side-effects is not exhaustive. You should consult your practitioner for full details of risks as they relate to you and the intended treatment.

- Injection related side-effects include bruising, redness, localised swelling, mild discomfort or irritation and headache.
- Treatment related side-effects typically occur when botulinum toxin affects nearby muscles other than those intended.

For the most common upper face treatments, this can cause 'drooping', and often involves the eyebrow and eyelid. In other treatment areas, the ability to smile normally may be affected, and where the lips are involved, eating, drinking and pronunciation may be more difficult.

For treatment of the neck muscles, or for sweating under the arms, this can affect the muscles of swallowing or breathing which, whilst rare, is much more serious.

Should these problems occur, they will resolve fully in a matter of weeks or months.

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Tip. Don't consider the risks simply as a list. Your practitioner should explain what they can do, and what you can do, to minimise these risks.

Tip. Don't consider the risks (or benefits) in isolation. Your practitioner should work with you to weigh the risks against the benefits, and the decision should be an agreement between you.

Restrictions

Advertising.

It is illegal to advertise a POM. This includes all references to brand or generic names, in all forms of media (including social media), directly or indirectly i.e. by inference. As a patient you may decide to choose a practitioner on the basis of a register like the JCCP's and you may also be influenced by their advertising. Illegal advertising may help you limit your choice.

Consultation

It is a legal requirement that a POM is provided, subject to a prescription, by or as directed by a prescriber. For botulinum toxins, the prescriber is a doctor, dentist, nurse prescriber or pharmacist prescriber. The prescriber is responsible for:

- The initial consultation and assessment, which must be face to face.
- Writing the prescription and, where appropriate, delegating the treatment to another competent practitioner
- Ensuring positive outcomes and when required, managing negative outcomes.