

Ophthalmology department

# Blepharospasm (eyelid spasm)

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet has been designed to give you information about **blepharospasm**. We hope it will answer some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have at this time. This leaflet is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your medical team, but aims to help you understand more about what is discussed. If you have any questions about the information below contact us using the details on the back page.

### What is blepharospasm?

Blepharospasm is a condition in which the eyelid(s) develop twitching, blinking and close in an uncontrolled manner. The spasm can last from a few seconds up to several minutes and may make it difficult to see during this time. It may be made worse by bright lighting conditions.

### Botulinum toxin injection treatment

Botulinum toxin injection – more often known as Botox – is an effective way to control the symptoms caused by eyelid spasm and other eyelid problems. The injections are known to work well in most affected individuals. However, the effect is temporary, and it is not a cure. Repeated injections will be needed for continued relief from symptoms. Occasionally, surgery can help patients whose symptoms are not helped with botulinum toxin or where its effectiveness diminishes over time.

**Please note:** a botulinum toxin injection is not a suitable treatment if you are trying for a baby, pregnant, or breast feeding

### Risks of treatment

As with many procedures there may be some risks involved including:

- failure to work effectively
- double vision
- droopy eyelid
- bruising

Any side effects of the toxin usually last for two to four months then wear off completely. There is no risk that they will be permanent. However, there is no effective treatment to make the side effects go away more quickly.

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## What can I expect to happen on the day?

You will be seen by an ophthalmologist at the outpatient clinic for an initial assessment, including your medical history and a full eye and eyelid examination. The first treatment will usually be performed at the same time as the initial assessment. Once booked into the toxin clinic the injections will be administered by a practitioner.

The practitioner will note any changes to your medical history and any allergies. New patients will need to sign a consent form, which will be valid for all future injections. However, we will remind you of the risks and benefits at each visit.

Generally, all patients are given a standard dose to treat the condition at the first appointment. After your first visit you are normally reviewed a few weeks later to see whether any top-up injections are required or whether you have experienced any side effects, and the dose needs to be reduced. Once we have established the correct dose of injection you need then the appointments are usually spaced between three- and six-monthly intervals.

## What will happen during the procedure?

Depending on the severity of the eyelid spasm, small doses of botulinum toxin are injected just under the skin at different sites around the eyelids.

The injections are given without the use of an anaesthetic.

You **do not** need to fast before your botulinum toxin injections.

The exact doses and the sites of injections may be varied depending on your response to previous treatments. The effect (weakness of the eyelid muscles and reduction in spasm) is apparent after three to four days and will last for about two to four months.

## What must I be aware of after the procedure?

You will be able to return home after the procedure. Most people who have the botulinum toxin injections resume normal activities immediately.

- do not rub your eye
- you may eat, drink, and take on daily activities as normal
- you can wash your face and hair as normal and do not require the eye to be covered before you leave the clinic make sure you have been given an appointment slip so you can book your next appointment.
- you should seek an emergency review if your eye itself becomes red and painful or your vision deteriorates

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## Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions or concerns, please call:

**Ophthalmology emergency department:** 020 3312 3245

**Western Eye Hospital eye clinic:** 020 3312 3236

**Charing Cross Hospital eye clinic:** 020 3311 0137

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:  
Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
[imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

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Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)

Ophthalmology department  
Published: June 2024  
Review date: June 2027  
Reference no: 967  
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