Botox treatment for anal fissure
Information for patients
What is an anal fissure?

An anal fissure is a common and painful problem caused by a small tear or ulcer (open sore) in the lining of the anus (back passage), just at the opening to the outside. This can cause bleeding, itching and pain with bowel movements, which can sometimes be severe.

Anal fissures usually heal within a few weeks, but those that have not healed within 4-6 weeks are called chronic fissures. There are various causes, such as constipation, passing hard stools, diarrhoea, childbirth, or it can develop alongside other conditions. However, sometimes there is no obvious cause for the fissure.
What is Botox?

Botulinum toxin (Botox) has been used for several years for the treatment of a variety of conditions which are caused by muscle over activity, such as muscle spasms in people with spinal injuries and cerebral palsy. Botox works by preventing muscles spasming (contracting).

Injecting Botox into muscle around the anus (back passage) will cause it to relax and reduce muscle tension. This should reduce any pain and will increase the blood flow to the fissure, encouraging it to heal naturally.

Your doctor will have recommended Botox treatment for your anal fissure if you have already tried alternative measures without success; such as creams (GTN rectogesic or diltiazem ointment), a high fibre diet, and laxatives.

The success rate for an anal fissure healing after an injection of Botox is 70 out of every 100 treatments. Sometimes the injection might need to be repeated, which is still successful in 50 out of every 100 treatments.
What happens during the procedure?

There is no special preparation needed before the procedure, so you can eat and drink as usual before coming in. You also do not need to carry out any bowel preparation, but please do carry out your usual hygiene routine (shower or bath) before you come in.

The procedure will be carried out in the outpatient clinic by a surgeon and only takes a few minutes to perform. You will be awake throughout the procedure and will be able to drive home or return to work afterwards.

The surgeon will discuss your symptoms, explain the procedure to you, and answer any questions you may have. You will then be asked to sign a consent form to confirm you are happy for the treatment to go ahead.

You will be asked to take down your lower clothes and lie on your left side on a couch. Once you are comfortable, the area around your anus will be cleaned with an alcohol wipe. The surgeon will then give two injections of Botox into your sphincter muscle, which surrounds your anus. This will be uncomfortable at the time, but is an extremely quick procedure and this discomfort should only last a very short time. You may be offered some local anaesthetic (to numb the area) but this will be discussed with you on the day.
After the procedure

Once the injections have been completed, you will be able to get dressed. You can go home when you are ready, as long as you feel well. If you would like to, you can have a seat in the waiting room before you leave.

We recommend that you take some painkillers, such as paracetamol, after the procedure (as needed) to relieve any soreness following the injections. The Botox will start to work gradually (usually over the next 72 hours). The effects of the Botox should last for approximately 2-3 months, which should be long enough for the fissure to heal.

It is important to make sure that you continue to keep your stools soft following the treatment, to avoid straining. Continue to include fibre in your diet or to use any laxatives you have been prescribed or would normally take.

We will contact you by telephone in 3 months’ time to discuss your progress. An appointment date and time for this telephone call will be given to you on the day. It is important that you check that we have the correct telephone number to contact you.
Are there any side-effects or risks?

As with any surgical procedure there are potential risks of minor bleeding, infection, or (extremely rarely) an allergic reaction to the Botox. All of these risks are rare, and will be discussed in more detail with you by the surgeon on the day, before you sign the consent form.

Because the Botox relaxes the muscle around your anus, there is small risk of temporary loss of control of flatulence (wind). More rarely, there is a risk of some temporary loss of control of bowel movements until the Botox wears off (approximately 2-3 months).

There is a small chance that the Botox injections will not relieve your symptoms. Should this be the case, we will arrange a further appointment with your consultant to discuss other treatment options.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or need advice please contact the Advanced Nurse Practitioners, either by telephone or email.

Tel: 01864 235 881

Email: pelvicfloor.advice@ouh.nhs.uk
If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221 473 or email PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk

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