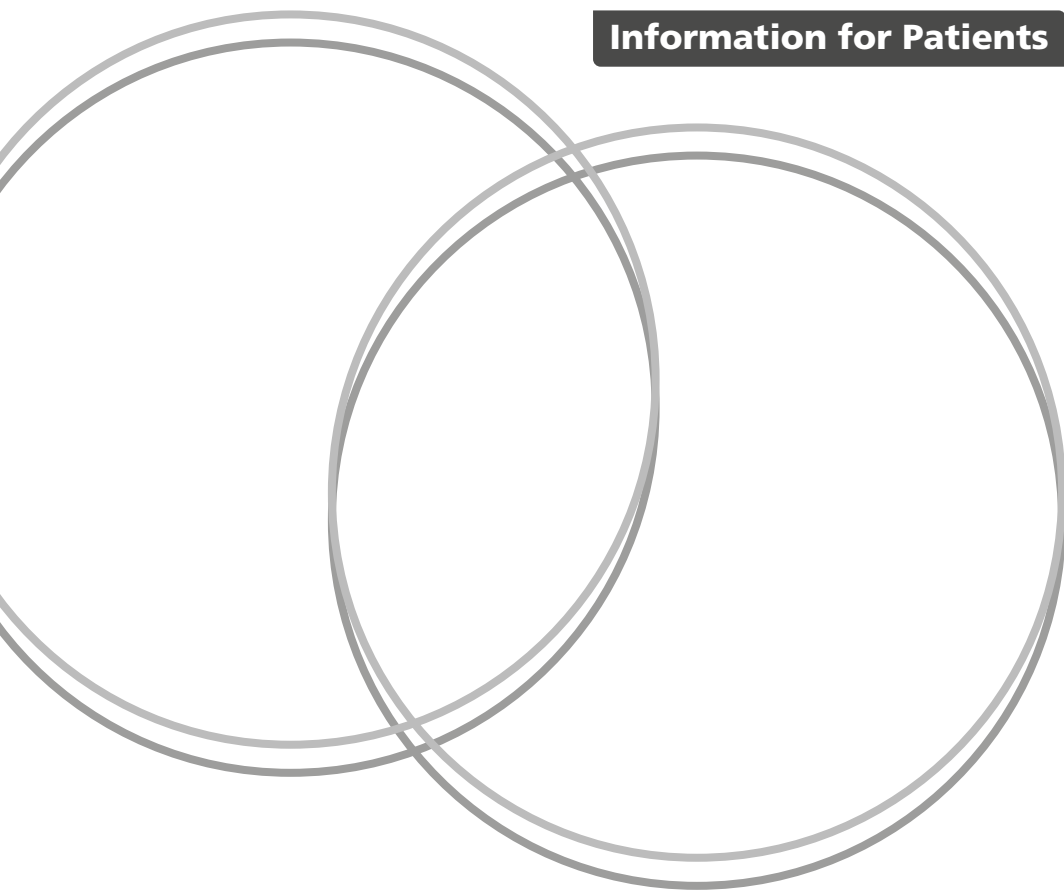




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Spasticity

Information for Patients



Oxford Centre for Enablement (OCE)

What is spasticity?

Spasticity is increased muscle tightness or stiffness. It can range from mild to severe and change over time. Spasticity can happen after the brain or the nerves in your spine are damaged

Sometimes the stiffness in a muscle can help a person to do something. If it is normally difficult for a person to stand up, spasticity can make their legs feel stronger. But it can sometimes lead to problems such as pain or difficulties with daily tasks. If spasticity carries on for a long time, it can reduce the amount a muscle is able to move.

What makes spasticity worse?

Spasticity can worsen with certain triggers. Identifying and managing these triggers can sometimes help avoid the need to change medication or treatment.

Common triggers:

- bladder problems like urinary tract infection or the bladder not emptying properly
- bowel problems like constipation
- skin problems like irritation or pressure areas
- infections
- pain and discomfort
- tiredness
- feeling hot
- feeling stressed or anxious.

How can I manage my spasticity?

Spasticity can be managed by:

- exercise
- physiotherapy
- changing the way you sit, stand or lie
- stretching
- using splints or supports
- medication
- a surgically implanted pump which delivers medication straight to the nerves in your spinal cord.
- surgery in very few cases.

What is physical management?

Physical management helps to treat your muscle stiffness. Exercises are made for your needs. It is your or your carer's responsibility to carry these out regularly. All exercises should be done in a slow and controlled way.

We may give you a splint, which supports and stretches your joints or show you different ways to improve the position of your joints. It is important that you include these in your daily routine. They need to be done regularly to be effective.

Medication:

There are many different types of medication that can be used alongside physical management of your symptoms. These can be helpful when your spasticity is very widespread and can be taken in different forms e.g. tablet or liquid. The type of medication most suitable for you depends on a number of things including other medical conditions, medications, potential side effects and other symptoms. We may make some recommendations to your GP regarding the right type of medication for you.

Botulinum toxin injections:

Botulinum is a toxin which when injected into muscles causes them to become weak and less stiff. It can take up to 14 days for the full effect to occur and then lasts 3-4 months. It is useful for targeting specific muscles and must be used together with physical management.

Sometimes more than one injection is needed.

Intrathecal Baclofen:

Baclofen is a medication that reduces muscle stiffness by changing nerve signals in the spinal cord. It is usually taken in tablet form. Some people cannot take high doses of baclofen this way as the drug reaches the brain and can cause side effects like drowsiness. These people may have baclofen sent directly to the spinal cord using an implantable pump. This method uses much smaller amounts of baclofen to treat the spasticity, which reduces any side effects.

It requires commitment from patients not only during the early stages but also because regular refills and replacements are needed.

For appointment information, contact:

Oxford Centre for Enablement admin

Tel: 01865 737451

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Lloyd Thomas & Sarah Cripps, Gastroenterology Pharmacists
June 2021

Review: June 2024

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information



Making a difference across our hospitals

charity@ouh.nhs.uk | 01865 743 444 | hospitalcharity.co.uk

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

