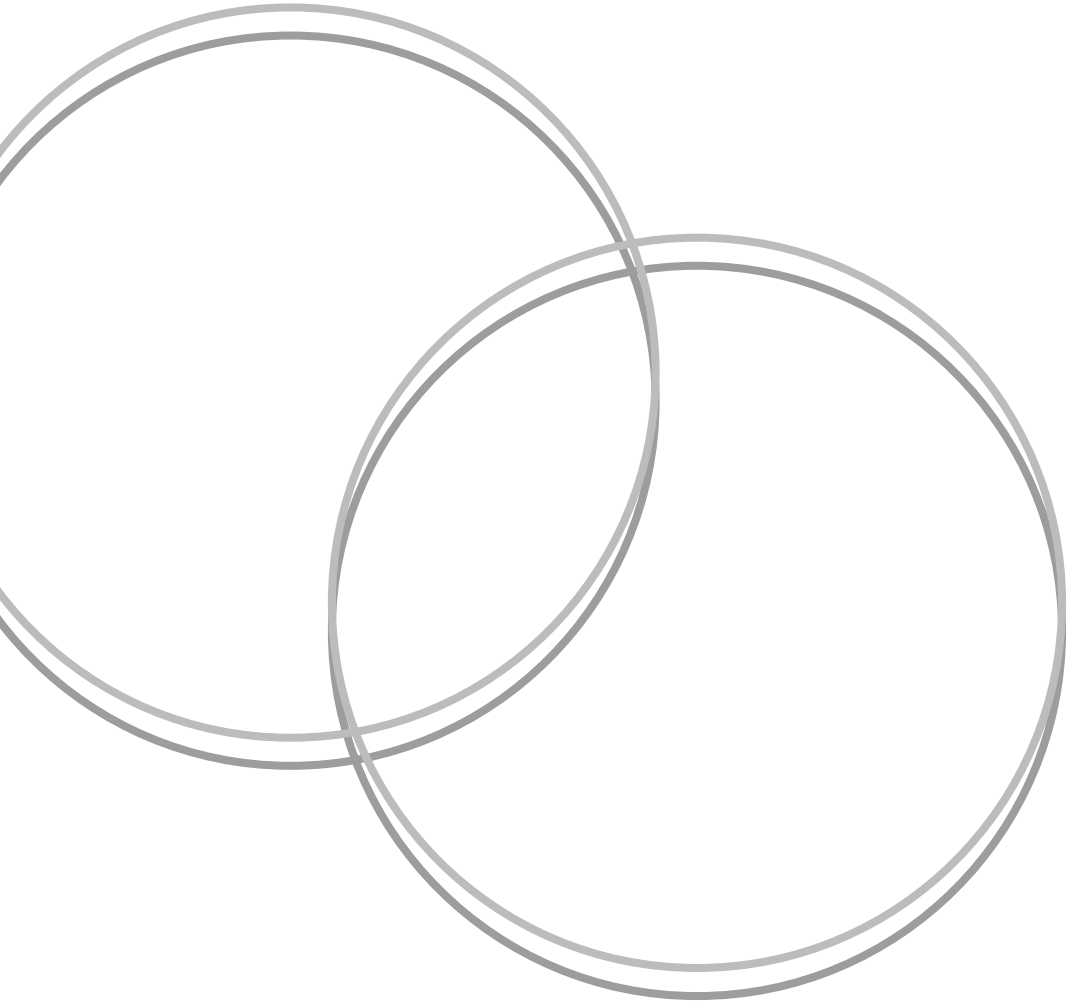
NHS
Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Botulinum Toxin Injections for Sialorrhea

Information for patients



Who is this leaflet for?

You have been given this leaflet as you have been offered botulinum toxin injections to treat your sialorrhea.

What is sialorrhea?

Sialorrhea is drooling or excessive secretion of saliva.

Common causes of sialorrhea are:

- a nerve, muscle or neurological (brain-related) condition
- muscular problems
- excessive production of saliva

What are botulinum toxin injections and how can they help?

Toxins are substances made by living things. Botulinum toxin is made by bacteria. Botulinum has been used as a medicine for many years. It is a safe treatment for sialorrhea.

The toxin is injected into the salivary glands, where it blocks the link between the salivary glands and the nerves that promote saliva production. This can help to reduce saliva production.

How long do the effects last?

You will not notice a difference straight away. The effects of the botulinum toxin injections come on gradually, usually between 3 and 10 days. They normally last for 3 to 6 months, wear off slowly and can then be repeated if effective.

How is the injection given?

Botulinum toxin is injected directly into the parotid and/or submandibular salivary glands . These are located on both sides of the face, in front of the ear and underneath the jaw.

The injections are carried out by a doctor with special training. They may use ultrasound, to guide the injection. The ultrasound machine uses sound waves to create an image on a screen, which is a painless way of making sure the injections go to the right place.

Are there side effects from botulinum toxin injections?

The most common side effects, which may affect 1 in 10 people, include:

- pain, tenderness, bruising or infection where the injection is given. These usually get better on their own.
- dry mouth
- altered sensation on the face – as the glands are situated close to a facial nerve
- dental changes – if you have a dry mouth for a long time (>110 days) this can cause tooth decay. This may lead to a cavity (hole in a tooth) or possible need for a tooth to be removed.

Serious complications have been reported to include:

- swallowing problems. This may occur due to relaxation of the swallowing muscles (This may affect up to 1 in 10 people)
- anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction to the medication). This may include difficulty breathing, hives or swelling of the soft tissue.

If a severe allergic reaction was to occur, this would most likely happen quickly whilst you are in the clinic room. However, if you start to find it hard to swallow or breathe soon after the injection, please get emergency medical help straight away.

Botulinum toxin and blood thinning medicine

If you are taking warfarin, your INR will need to be in the therapeutic range (usually 2.0-3.0). Please make sure you have your INR checked by your GP no longer than one week before the appointment. You should bring the result to your clinic appointment. Please continue to take warfarin as usual.

If you are taking any other blood thinning medicine, such as rivaroxaban, apixaban or dabigatran, please do not stop taking these.

Botulinum toxin and pregnancy

If you are pregnant, breastfeeding or think you may become pregnant, please tell the Clinical Team.

Is there anything I should look out for when I go home?

Please get medical help straight away, if:

- you find it hard to swallow or breathe (call 999)
- you are bleeding heavily (contact your GP)
- you have very painful bruises (contact your GP).

Please speak to the Clinical Team if you are worried about the injections or other treatments, or if you would like to talk about the information in this leaflet.

Contact details for more information and advice

Clinical Team

Tel: **01865 737 451**

(**Monday-Friday 8.30-16.30**)

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: Rachel Dye, Specialist Physiotherapist

November 2026
Review: November 2029
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)

Oxford Hospitals Charity

Leaflet reference number: OMI 124938