

**Patient
Information**

Blepharospasm

Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about the eye condition blepharospasm and the treatment available.

What is blepharospasm?

This is the name given to a condition where the muscles around the eyelids develop an involuntary spasm and cause the lids to twitch, flutter or blink uncontrollably. In severe cases sufferers may be unable to open their eyes due to excessive eyelid spasm, although this is rare.

Blepharospasm usually develops gradually, and often starts with increased blinking and sensitivity to light. The symptoms vary from day to day and are often worse when you are tired or under stress. Reading, prolonged computer work or watching TV can make symptoms worse. Other situations which can start off the symptoms are driving, or being in windy or smoky environments.

Talking, whistling, touching the face, walking and relaxation can improve the problem. Most people blink more frequently during conversation, but those with blepharospasm tend to blink less when talking.

What causes blepharospasm?

The cause is not known. However, it is usually more common in women than men, and affects people over the age of 50.

What treatment is available?

There is no cure for blepharospasm. In some cases the condition may improve or disappear, although this is unusual. Botulinum toxin is the main treatment. It can be helpful in 90 out of every 100 sufferers.

Botulinum toxin is a special substance which blocks the signals sent from the nerves to the muscles.

Reference No.

GHPI0183_03_24

Department

Ophthalmology

Review due

March 2027

Patient Information

Small injections of botulinum toxin are used just under the skin to control the excessive muscle contractions. The injections take about 2 days to start to work and usually last for up to 3 months.

As the effect is temporary, the injections usually have to be repeated to control the excessive muscle contractions.

Are there side effects?

The side effects from botulinum injections are unusual and temporary. They include drooping of the eyelids, dry eye and occasional double vision. The side effects are made worse if the treated area is rubbed in the 24 hours after the injection is given.

All side effects will settle in time.

If you have any concerns about your treatment, please ask the doctor or nurse practitioner during your appointment.

Contact information

For any urgent problems with your eye, please call Eye Triage.

Tel: 0300 422 3578

Monday to Friday, 8:00am to 1:00pm and 2:00pm to 5:30pm

Saturday, 8:00am to 1:00pm

Out of hours, calls will be diverted to the eye doctor on call.

Further information

Patient

Website: <https://patient.info/bones-joints-muscles/hemifacial-spasm-leaflet/blepharospasm>

Dystonia.org.uk

Website: www.dystonia.org.uk/pages/faqs/category/eye-dystonia

Content reviewed: March 2024

Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>