

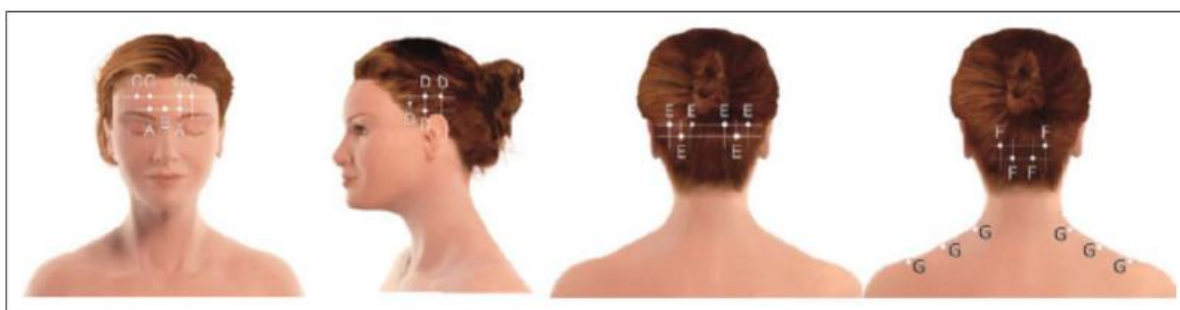
# Onabotulinumtoxin A (Botox®) for Chronic Migraine Prevention

## What is this medication and why is it prescribed?

- Botox® is a prescription medication made from botulinum toxin (a toxin produced by the bacteria *Clostridium botulinum*). It is used to prevent headaches in adults with chronic migraine who experience 15 or more headache days each month with headache lasting 4 or more hours each day.

## How should this medication be used?

- Botox® is administered in the pain clinic by a physician as 31 injections into muscles around the forehead, sides and back of the head, as well as the neck/shoulder area. The typical injection sites are shown in the below diagram.



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- The injections create a small bubble at the site usually disappear after a few hours.
- The entire injection process takes about 15 minutes. The standard headache protocol involves administration of 155 units of Botox® although the total dose given may be modified by the physician.

## When does this medication start to work?

- The effect of Botox® typically starts 3 to 7 days after injection. The peak effect is not reached until approximately 10 to 14 days following injection.
- If you achieve success with Botox®, it will be continued about every 12 weeks.
- To determine if Botox® can be stopped for those who have achieved success with its use, the administration of injections will be spaced further apart. If there is no increase in headaches with this approach, the Botox® injections may be stopped.
- If no improvement in headaches is noticed after 2 to 3 sets of injections, the Botox® injections will be discontinued.

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## How much pain relief can be expected with this medication?

- Botox® is not a cure for migraine headache sufferers.
- In clinical trials, patients treated with Botox® experienced 2 less headache days per month compared to those who received no Botox®. In addition, the patients who received Botox® were better able to function and perform their usual activities, even when they had a headache.
- ***A detailed headache diary should be completed to record the frequency and duration of headaches occurring post-injection to assess the effectiveness of Botox®.***

## What special precautions should I follow?

- Avoid rubbing the injection sites after Botox® injection. This prevents excessive spreading of Botox® outside the area of injection.
- Botox® has **NOT** been studied in pregnant or breastfeeding women. Therefore, Botox® is not recommended during pregnancy, to women who wish to become pregnant in the near future, or women who are breastfeeding.
- Botox® should **NOT** be used in individuals with neurological conditions that cause paralysis or muscle weakness (e.g. myasthenia gravis).

## What side effects can this medication cause?

Botox® is generally well tolerated. Side effects are typically reversible with time. Possible side effects include:

- Slight discomfort may be experienced with injection into the muscle. Pain and/or bruising at the injection site may occur.
- The most common side effects reported by patients are:
  - Neck pain
  - Headache
  - Temporary drooping of the eyelid
  - Muscle pain
  - Facial muscle weakness or muscle spasms

Allergies to Botox® are uncommon.

***If you experience difficulties related to swallowing, speech or breathing following the administration of Botox® for headaches, please seek immediate medical attention.***

## Drug cost/coverage

- The cost of Botox® for 200 units is just over \$700 while 100 units is about \$400.
- Most private drug plans will cover Botox®. However, they often require paperwork to be completed prior to authorizing drug coverage approval.
- If you are an Ontario Drug Benefit recipient, an Exceptional Access Program (EAP) application must be completed to obtain Botox® drug coverage for chronic migraine prevention purposes.

## What storage conditions are needed for this medication?

- Botox® should be stored in the refrigerator at 2 to 8°C.
- To minimize issues related to the transportation of Botox®, you may wish to have your Botox® prescription filled at the St. Joseph's Hospital Prescription Shop immediately before your pain clinic Botox® injection appointment. The Prescription Shop is a retail pharmacy located in Grosvenor Entrance 1 main lobby, Zone A, Level 1. Weekday hours of operation are 9:00 am to 5:30 pm.