

BOTULINUM TOXIN INFORMATION

Benign essential blepharospasm (BEB) is the term most often used to describe the condition of involuntary forcible closure or spasm of the eyelids. The muscles that produce normal blinking of the eyelids contract excessively in essential blepharospasm causing the eyelids to remain closed for a few seconds to several minutes. This condition makes driving, reading, watching television and ordinary tasks very difficult or impossible. The cause for this disorder is unknown. Treatment in the past has included drug therapy, but despite the use of many different types of medications, such treatment has only limited success. Before the advent of botulinum toxin, the only other approach involved rather extensive lid surgery. Botulinum injections are currently the treatment of choice for BEB.

Botulinum toxin is a substance found in some cases of food poisoning (botulism). However, when injected into the eyelid in extremely small quantities, the drug causes temporary weakness of the eyelid. This treatment does not remove the fundamental problem of abnormal muscle control but is a mechanism to reduce the resulting spasm of the involved muscles. The duration of effect depends upon the patient and the dose levels given, but the average effect lasts from three to four months, with some patients having an effect for up to ten months.

There are side effects from the injections. These include temporary drooping of the upper eyelid (11%), dryness of the eye requiring eye drops (4.5%), tearing of the eye due to weakness of the lower lid (3.4%), difficulty in closing the upper lid (3.4%), or sensitivity to light (1.4%). Other side effects include inflammation of the cornea, double vision, hemorrhage, or bruising of the lids after injection. These effects are generally short-lived, lasting usually no longer than two to four weeks after injection.

The doctor will inject a minute quantity of botulinum toxin into one or more of your eyelids. Please check in with the office about one week after the injections to report how you are doing or to note any problems with the injections.