



BOTOX IN THE TREATMENT OF CHILDREN WITH CEREBRAL PALSY

Botox is a drug made from botulism toxin. It has been shown to help children with cerebral palsy and related conditions such as other neuromuscular diseases in several ways. It can help children who have problems with the muscle tone in their arms, legs and trunk. And it has been shown to be useful in children who have troubles with daily activities, such as sitting and walking. The use of Botox has also been shown to delay the need for surgery.

Botox was originally called OCULINUM. Dr. Scott, an ophthalmologist in California, was the first to use these injections to help patients by injecting a small amount of this medicine into the eye muscles of people with cross-eyes. He noted remarkable improvement. To this day Botox is still used for this purpose.

The use of Botox in children with cerebral palsy has had over 20 years of experience. The drug is injected into the muscles that are spastic (overactive or too tight). By injecting this drug, the muscles may loosen up. The effect of the medicine is not long-term and usually the duration lasts three to six months. At three month intervals, repeat injections may be given if the muscles become tight again.

Botulism toxin is a substance produced by certain kinds of bacteria. Food containing botulism toxin can cause food poisoning (botulism). Botulism toxin used to treat people is made in a special way so that only very tiny amounts are contained in each injection. The amount is much less than the amount that can cause food poisoning.

RISKS: The most common problems with children after injections are soreness in their legs with some redness near the injection sites. These problems are usually short-term and go away in one to two days. The onset of the muscle weakness is noted several days after injection at its maximum effect.

GOALS: The goal of the treatment is to make certain muscles weak to allow better motor and functional control of spastic muscles. After the injections, a child may feel generally weak and tired.

There is a risk if Botox is injected in large doses into veins and arteries, there may be side effects, but so far the research is showing that the currently used dose injected into muscles leaves no permanent impairment. When properly diluted, this drug may be safely injected into the muscles. There is a low risk of allergic reaction.

Since its use, Botox has shown marked improvement in function and motor control when injected and may be of benefit to a child. Your doctor cannot promise that your child will benefit from these injections. Botox does not replace other diagnostic and therapeutic procedures that might benefit your child. The advantages are that this is minimally invasive and may delay the onset of surgery in the future, while maximizing sitting and walking abilities.

Sources for More Information

- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons – <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=a00260>