

# Botox injections for migraine

Botox injections are a preventive treatment option for chronic migraine. They can help to reduce how often you have migraine attacks and how severe they are.



## About Botox

Botox (botulinum toxin type A) is a type of medicine known as a nerve toxin. It comes from the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. Botox is injected into muscles, causing them to relax.

Botox is used to treat lots of conditions, including migraine. It's not clear exactly how it works for migraine. But scientists think it blocks chemicals called neurotransmitters being released from nerves. The neurotransmitters are involved in carrying pain signals. Blocking them may prevent the pain you get in migraine.



## Who can have Botox for migraine

Botox is approved on the NHS in the UK for the treatment of chronic migraine in adults. Chronic migraine means you have at least 15 headache days a month, with migraine symptoms on at least eight of these. It's not licensed for episodic migraine or other types of headache.

Botox for migraine is only available via a headache specialist or consultant neurologist. Your GP will need to refer you. The specialist will assess your history and symptoms and discuss your treatment options.

To be offered treatment with Botox, your doctor will want to make sure:

- you have tried at least three other preventive treatments, which haven't helped
- you are not taking acute medicines too frequently, which can cause medication overuse headache.

It's important that you only get Botox treatment for migraine from a specialist with the appropriate training. Botox used for cosmetic treatment is given at different doses and in different areas to Botox for migraine.



## What Botox injections for migraine involve

You will have an appointment for your Botox treatment at a clinic in hospital. Botox treatment for migraine involves a series of between 31 and 39 small injections. You have these around your forehead, above your ears, on the back of your head, and along your neck and shoulders.

The effects of Botox wear off over time. You will usually be able to have the injections every 12 weeks.

### Monitoring treatment

You should be asked to keep a headache diary to monitor how well the treatment works for you. If it's helping, you can usually carry on taking it until your migraine has changed from chronic to episodic for three months in a row. Episodic means you have fewer than 15 headache days a month.

If it's not helping, talk to your specialist about other treatment options you can try. These may include other types of preventive treatment.



## Side effects of Botox

The most common side effects of Botox treatment include:

- neck pain
- muscle pain, stiffness and weakness
- rash and pain at the injection site
- drooping of the eyelid.

Some people notice their migraine attacks get worse at first. These side effects are usually temporary and happen in the first few days after treatment. If you have any concerns, contact the clinic where you had your treatment, your GP or NHS 111.

Doctors will not usually recommend using it during pregnancy, unless the benefits outweigh the risk. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant before trying Botox.

## Find out more

You can read more about Botox injections for migraine on our website at:

- [migrainetrust.org/botox](https://migrainetrust.org/botox)

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Reviewed by: The Migraine Trust Information and Support Services Team and Reviewer Panel.

If you have feedback on our information, please get in touch at: [feedback@migrainetrust.org](mailto:feedback@migrainetrust.org)

Contact our Helpline on **0808 802 0066** (Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm) or through our contact form and Live Chat service at [migrainetrust.org/support](https://migrainetrust.org/support). You can also email us at [info@migrainetrust.org](mailto:info@migrainetrust.org).

