STEPHANIE WEST | CONSULTANT OPHTHALMIC SURGEON

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# Parents Information – Botulinum Toxin for Strabismus in children

This leaflet aims to answer some of the questions you might have about your child's squint procedure. Please note that it won't cover everything, as every child and their squint is different. Miss West will discuss your child's particular case with you but if you are unclear about any aspect of this treatment or have any further questions, please ask.

## What is botulinum Toxin?

Botulinum toxin (also called Botox) is a medicine that can temporarily weaken muscles. For squints, it's injected into the eye muscles to help straighten the eyes.

## What is the purpose of my child having botulinum toxin for their squint?

A squint is a turn or wander in an eye which may need to be corrected for several reasons, botulinum toxin injection can help:

- Straighten the eyes temporarily
- Give doctors more information about the squint
- See if straightening the eyes will cause double vision
- Avoid or delay the need for squint surgery

## What happens during the procedure?

Injection of botulinum toxin is a day-case procedure, so your child should be in and out of hospital on the same day.

Your child will have a short general anaesthetic so they're asleep during the injection. Miss West will inject a small amount of botulinum toxin into the eye muscle. The procedure usually takes about 15-20 minutes.

However, your child will be in the theatre department for longer, because they will need to spend some time in the recovery area until they have fully woken up. When your child has recovered fully from the anaesthetic, eaten and drunk fluid and the nurses are happy for him/her to be discharged, you are free to go home – this will usually be a few hours later.

## What should we expect after the injection?

The effects usually start 2-3 days after the injection. Your child's eye may look more turned at first, but this should improve. The effects typically last 2-3 months before wearing off.

## Are there any side effects?

## Temporary more common side effects include

- Temporary reversal or change in the direction of the squint
- Temporary double vision, which is more common in teenagers and older children
- Temporary drooping of the eyelid (ptosis) on the injected side, usually resolving after a few weeks
- Slight bruising or redness of the surface of the eye (subconjunctival haemorrhage)
- Bruising around the eye affecting the eyelids, resembling a black eye
- Slight ache around the eye and eyelid immediately after the injection

## Rare complications

- Scratch on the front of the eye (cornea) from the anaesthetic or minor injury while the eye is numb
- Very rare possibility of the needle perforating or piercing the eye
- Significant bleeding occurring around the eye, potentially causing serious eye or vision damage
- Very rarely, permanent paralysis of the injected muscle

## Other considerations

- Some children may experience temporary problems with sports and school activities due to double vision
- The effect of the toxin may result in an over-correction or under-correction of the squint initially. In most cases, there is gradual straightening of the eyes as the paralysis wears off
- Rarely, the change in alignment may remain after the botulinum toxin wears off

It's important to note that most side effects are temporary and improve with time. The treatment is generally considered safe, with no risk to overall health or risk of developing botulism or food poisoning

## How is the anaesthetic given?

Squint surgery is done under a general anaesthetic. This is given either by an injection into the back of the hand (this is not felt because of the numbing cream) or by placing a mask over the nose and mouth. The anaesthetist will choose the best method for your child but in very young children it is usually easier to use the mask.