

NeuroRehabilitation

Sunshine Coast & Hervey Bay

PATIENT INFORMATION

What is spasticity?

Sometimes following injury or illness to the brain or spinal cord, muscles may become stiff and tight causing problems with movement, pain, spasms, joint deformity, hygiene, sleep and functional impairment. This increase in muscle tone is commonly referred to as spasticity or hypertonicity. Common causes of spasticity include stroke, brain injury, cerebral palsy, spinal injury or multiple sclerosis.

Prolonged muscle tightness can result in permanent muscle shortening and joint contracture. Once contractures occur treatment can be very difficult and may require surgical treatment. Appropriate early management of spasticity can prevent this from occurring.

What is cervical dystonia?

Cervical dystonia is an involuntary contraction of cervical muscles which may cause abnormal head and neck posture, tremor, spasms and pain. Whilst it may occur following injury or illness to the brain and spinal cord, sometimes the cause remains unknown.

Botulinum toxin injections

Botulinum toxin is a purified protein that is extracted from bacteria under controlled laboratory conditions and intramuscular injection of botulinum toxin is a common medical procedure to treat spasticity and cervical dystonia. The procedure involves injecting botulinum toxin into the muscle under ultrasound guidance. Once injected the medication blocks the release of a neurotransmitter from the nerve which then allows muscle to gradually relax. It takes 1-2 weeks for this to commence. The duration of effect is variable but the medication remains active for at least 3 months. This duration can be improved through participating in a therapy program. Repeat injections are usually required for ongoing clinical benefit. It is important to note that botulinum toxin can be less effective if spasticity and cervical dystonia have become severe so the sooner it is diagnosed and treated, the better the outcome can be.

Although every effort is made to avoid complications, there are always potential side effects associated with this procedure. Possible complications include bleeding, infection, pain, numbness, muscle weakness, itch, rash, flu-like illness and upper respiratory tract infection like bronchitis. Although rare, serious side effects include breathing difficulties, swallowing difficulties, seizure and allergic reaction. **Please seek urgent medical attention for respiratory tract infections and other serious reactions.** You will need to inform the healthcare workers you have undergone this procedure. You should also inform Dr Jennings-Bell of any complications.

Goals of treatment

People may be affected by spasticity/dystonia in different ways and therefore each person may have different goals. It is important that goals are realistic and achievable. Goals may include:

- Improve/maintain independence
- Improve/maintain limb position and function
- Improve/maintain mobility
- Improve/maintain hygiene

NeuroRehabilitation

Sunshine Coast & Hervey Bay

- Reduce the risk of falls
- Reduce pain and spasm
- Reduce analgesic requirements
- Reduce the burden of care
- Prevent contracture and avoid surgery

Procedure funding

There are 4 components to the process that require funding.

1. The medication:
 - i. The PBS has approved the use of botulinum toxin to treat spasticity following an acute neurological illness or injury. The PBS requires a small co-payment that covers the medication up to 4 times within the first 12 months and then 2 times each year thereafter. After 12 months if you choose to have more than 2 procedures per year, the medication will have to be funded at your own expense. If the spasticity is due to cerebral palsy, the PBS will fund up to 4 injections each year indefinitely. If it is cervical dystonia, the PBS will fund up to 4 injections each year indefinitely.
 - ii. If you are covered by Worker's Compensation or NIISQ, you could be covered for up to 4 injections per year.
2. The procedure performed by the physician:
 - i. The initial consult is bulk billed, but an out of pocket cost is required for the procedure. Medicare will provide a rebate after the procedure. If you have a DVA Gold Card, there is no out of pocket cost for the procedure.
 - ii. If funded by Worker's Compensation, NIISQ or another third party insurer, the procedure is covered by your insurer.
3. Therapy.
4. Equipment.

Therapy options

Therapy may help prolong the benefits of the procedure. It should commence approximately 1-2 weeks following the injections, so you will need to plan ahead with your therapist. Outpatient therapy can be funded through:

1. Private health insurance often provides a rebate for private therapy clinics.
2. NDIS participants can discuss including physiotherapy and/or occupational therapy with your coordinator.
3. DVA card holders can access up to 12 therapy sessions per year (contact DVA for details).
4. Medicare will cover up to 5 therapy sessions each calendar year if your GP has completed a Chronic Disease Management Plan. This option will probably incur a gap payment for each session. This option alone is unlikely to provide an adequate level of therapy following your procedure.
5. Your own expense if none of the above options apply to you.

Equipment

Persistent use of orthoses can improve outcomes and increase the duration of effect between injections. An effective splinting regimen may involve wearing a dynamic orthosis during the day and a static orthosis

NeuroRehabilitation

Sunshine Coast & Hervey Bay

overnight. You can discuss and work with your therapist as you use your orthoses to improve the outcome of the botulinum toxin injection procedure.

Dynamic orthosis – Soft splints, often custom designed, that allow guided movement enabling the patient to work towards a desired motion. They can improve muscle tone, pain and motor performance.

Static orthosis – Rigid splints are designed to prolong muscle stretch by holding a body segment in place to prevent undesired movement or posture. You can discuss and trial static splints with your therapist.

Electrical stimulation device – Muscle stimulators may be an option to assist with ankle dorsiflexion, knee flexion or knee extension where there is weakness due to illness or injury of the central nervous system.

Clinic locations

NeuroRehabilitation Sunshine Coast is located at Suite 22, 16 Innovation Parkway, Birtinya. The rooms are situated on the ground floor, allowing easy access for all clients.

In Hervey Bay, the clinic is held at Hervey Bay Physio (www.herveybayphysio.com.au) which is located at 3/7-9 Bideford Street, Torquay. If you wish to enquire with Hervey Bay Physio for your therapy or clinic options, you can contact their service on 07 4125 3350 or email info@herveybayphysio.com.au.

Referrals

All referrals for the Sunshine Coast and Hervey Bay clinics should be sent to Dr Jennings-Bell through Medical Objects or admin@neurorehabilitation.com.au. If your therapist has made the recommendation to see Dr Jennings-Bell, you will still require a medical referral. Your referral will be reviewed by Dr Jennings-Bell and Practice staff will contact you to arrange an appointment. GP referrals last up to 12 months whereas a specialist referral will only last 3 months. If you do not have a referral, Medicare rebates will not be available to you.

Additional instructions

- Please attend your injection appointment with a family member, friend or carer. Their assistance may be required during the injections and to drive you home afterwards.
- Assessments and procedures are performed with ultrasound, so we ask that you wear loose fitted clothing to the clinic for your comfort and convenience.
- If you are on a blood thinning medication, you must inform Dr Jennings-Bell. If you are taking Warfarin you will need to attend with an INR result within target range within the last week.
- If you are unwell please inform the clinic as it will be necessary to reschedule your appointment.

Dr Warren Jennings-Bell
FAFRM (RACP), MBBS (Hons),
BMedSc, BSc (Hons)
2971338T



NeuroRehabilitation Sunshine Coast
16 Innovation Parkway, Birtinya QLD 4575
PO Box 390 Buderim QLD 4556
e: admin@neurorehabilitation.com.au
(07) 5337 8100

www.neurorehabilitation.com.au