

# 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, headaches and pain. Whilst it may occur following injury or illness to the brain and spinal cord, often 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. The duration of effect is variable, but the medication remains active for at least 3 months. 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 and flu-like illness. Although rare, serious side effects include breathing difficulties, swallowing difficulties, seizure and allergic reactions. A swallowing problem may lead to a chest infection. **Please seek urgent medical attention for these 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.

#### Ultrasound use

NeuroRehabilitation Sunshine Coast is registered with the Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation Scheme to offer an ultrasound service. Should you wish to have treatment, possible advantages and disadvantages will be explained to you, including any possible risks for using an ultrasound. Generally ultrasound use during injections is safe, but there are some situations in which it may not be recommended. If you are experiencing, wearing or have any of the following, the procedure may not be performed:

- casts, dressings, open wounds/ulcers,
- severe limb oedema/swelling, or cellulitis, and
- ultrasound use over or cardiac pacemakers or implanted defibrillators.

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### 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
- 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 2 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 may 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 injections indefinitely.
- ii. If you are covered by Worker's Compensation or other third insurers (e.g. NISQ), 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, NISQ or another third party insurer, the procedure is covered by your insurer.

### 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.

### Referrals

All referrals should be sent to Dr Jennings-Bell securely through Medical Objects or via email ([admin@neurorehabilitation.com.au](mailto: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 12 months or indefinitely (if specified by the GP) whereas a specialist referral will only last 3 months. If you do not have a referral, Medicare rebates will not be available to you.

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### Failure to attend

If you are unable to attend or have decided to not attend, please notify our practice as soon as possible. You can telephone us on (07) 5337 8100 or email us [reception@neurorehabilitation.com.au](mailto:reception@neurorehabilitation.com.au). Failure to notify the practice will incur a non-attendance fee and prevent someone else from receiving treatment.

### Possible complications

As part of the initial consult you will have provided consent to proceed with treatment. Botulinum toxin is well tolerated, but as a reminder to you of the possible complications, you may experience:

- bleeding, infection, pain, numbness, muscle weakness, itch, rash, flu-like illness, breathing difficulties, swallowing difficulties, respiratory tract infection, seizures and allergy.

The most common of these is muscle pain/discomfort. If this occurs you can consider taking paracetamol to manage the symptoms. If you are able to take ibuprofen, this may also help with the muscle discomfort.

**Botulinum toxin is absolutely contraindicated in pregnancy and while breastfeeding. If you are considering pregnancy, please discuss with Dr Jennings-Bell.**

Regarding the use of ultrasound during the procedure, there are some contraindications for ultrasound use while performing intramuscular botulinum toxin injections. These include:

- casts, dressings, open wounds/ulcers,
- severe limb oedema/swelling,
- cellulitis, and
- ultrasound use over or cardiac pacemakers or implanted defibrillators.

### IMPORTANT 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.

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