

Botox Therapy for Spasmodic Dysphonia

Thank you for your interest in the voice disorder, Spasmodic Dysphonia and the treatment of botulinum toxin (Botox). Below is information that may be helpful.

What is Dysphonia?

Dysphonia is a physician's term for an abnormal voice. It can also be called hoarseness. There are several types of dysphonia. One specific type of dysphonia which we discuss here is called Spasmodic Dysphonia.

What is Spasmodic Dysphonia?

Spasmodic Dysphonia (better known as SD) relates to specific dysfunction of the nerves in the voice box. In patients with Spasmodic Dysphonia, the voice typically has tight, strangulated speech with frequent interruptions. In severe cases, a complete inability to communicate may occur.

What causes Spasmodic Dysphonia?

The underlying cause is actually unknown, however, researchers and neurologists believe it is dystopia (muscle spasm) of the vocal cord. This same process can be seen in other parts of the body such as writer's cramp, spasms or tics of the eye, or torticollis, which is spasm of the neck muscles.

How do you treat Spasmodic Dysphonia?

Until recently the only treatment was vocal therapy with a speech therapist. However, advances in medical research led to the use of botulinum toxin (Botox) in 1991.

What is botulinum toxin and is it safe?

Medical application of botulinum toxin (Botox) has been approved as safe by the FDA for many uses. In very minute and dilute doses a medical grade of botulinum toxin called Botox has been proven an effective treatment for several spasmodic muscular disorders, including eye twitching (blepharospasm), muscle spasms of the jaw (oromandibular dystopia), spasms of the esophagus (cricopharyngeal spasm) as well as cosmetic procedures and overactive sweat glands (hyperhidrosis). The most dramatic effect, however, is its application in voice disorders.

How does the Botox work?

The Botox affects nerve receptors in muscles and relaxes them. If one has Spasmodic Dysphonia, the Botox can relax the muscles of the voice box. This allows a smoother and uninterrupted pattern of speech.

How is Botox administered?

It is administered in an office setting by physicians who have special advanced training in voice disorders. The Botox is injected through the skin with a needle that is connected to a nerve monitor. Once we are in the voice box, we ask the patient to speak so we can inject the toxin directly into the muscle, thus giving the greatest benefit.

Does it hurt?

A very minute amount of numbing medicine is given prior to the injection so that the injection causes minimal discomfort.

Are there any side effects?

The only known side effect is a breathy voice, typically for up to two weeks post-injection but may last longer. Patients may also experience a mild cough when drinking liquids the first five to seven days.

How soon after the injection will it become effective?

Within two to seven days after a patient receives an injection, the voice relaxes (becomes breathy). When the breathiness diminishes, the beneficial effect can last upwards of three to four months.

Is the treatment permanent?

Unfortunately, the Botox will wear off and patients will need a repeat injection. However, for some patients, this treatment can be the difference between a reclusive existence and a healthy lifestyle with the ability to communicate easily.

As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call on us at (585) 256-3550 and ask for our nurse. We are all here to assist you in any way we can.