

What is Botox?

- Botox is a protein called OnabotulinumtoxinA. In nature, this protein is produced by a bacteria, *Clostridium Botulinum*.
- The protein used for medical therapy is a purified form.

How does Botox work for migraine?

- Botox works by an effect on sensory nerves that modulates pain.
- Botox may also decrease muscle contraction which may be beneficial in certain zones.

Botox is the first treatment that was specifically approved to treat chronic migraine. It was approved in Canada in 2011.

Who should try Botox

Botox is indicated for patients with chronic migraine. Your healthcare provider will discuss this with you.

How often are the injections repeated?

Injections are done every 3 months. A Botox trial usually involves 2 or 3 sets of injections, as some patients do not respond to the first set.

What are the chances of improvement?

≥50% reduction in headache or migraine days in approximately 45–50% of patients, and ≥75% reduction ("super responders") in about 20–30%, with real-world figures sometimes reaching ~33%.

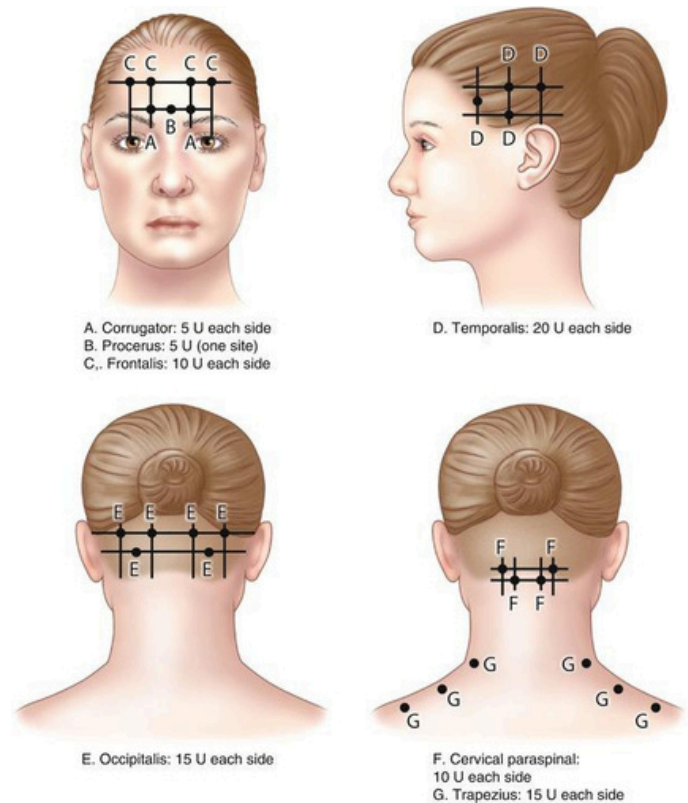
What are the side effects?

Always discuss risks with your healthcare provider.

1. Minor cosmetic changes in your forehead and eyebrows.
2. Pain around the injections sites, usually lasting a few days or less.
3. Weakness of the neck and shoulder may occur but is very rare.

All side effects of Botox will go away with time and can be avoided with an adapted protocol.

Allergies to Botox are extremely rare.

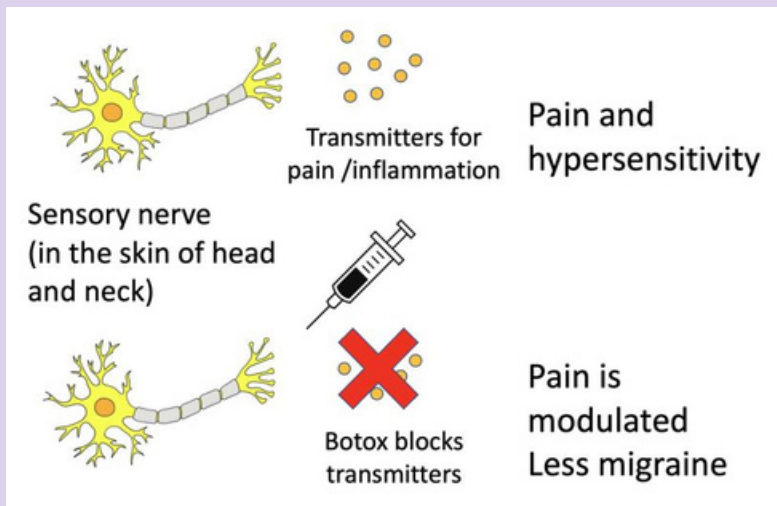


Where are the injections?

The physician injecting will use a protocol targeting different zones. The number of injections can be between 31 and 39 (155 to 195 units). It seems like a lot, but it takes 5-10 minutes to do.

The History of Botox

The use of Botox for migraine came from random observations of improvement of migraine in women receiving Botox for cosmetic purposes in the 80's. Chronic migraine is common in women in their 40-50s. The benefit was reported to the company, and clinical trials were designed, finally proving that Botox could really treat chronic migraine. Then scientists discovered how it worked!



What are the chances of improving according to studies?

Botox is indicated to treat chronic migraine ≥ 15 days of headache month, 8 of which are migraine

45-50%
get 50% better

20-30%
get 75% better

These are ball park figures for % decrease in migraine days

Other benefits can include

1. Decrease in attack severity
2. Attacks easier to treat
3. Decrease of days on which an acute med is needed
4. Decrease in neck pain

How long should I try Botox to see if it works for me?

Some people get better after the first cycle of injections. Some will see a clearer improvement after the second or third cycle. The benefit tends to increase over the first year of therapy, then stabilizes.

What if I have tried other preventives or if I overuse acute meds?

In the studies on Botox, patients who had failed other preventives or were overusing acute medications also improved (except patients using opioids who were not studied).

Botox should not be used by women who are pregnant or planning to be pregnant

The safety of Botox during pregnancy has not been demonstrated, but some reassuring reports are available. Discuss any question related to pregnancy with your healthcare provider.

Where can I find a healthcare provider to discuss Botox?

Many physicians can inject Botox: neurologists, plastic surgeons, pain specialists, and family doctors. It is important to find a physician who has received the appropriate training and has experience using Botox. [See our headache clinic locator.](#)