Let's Talk About...

Botulinum Toxin for Torticollis

Botulinum toxin is a medicine that loosens muscles so they are not too tight. This can help with muscle spasticity. Usually, the botulinum toxin shot is given with a small needle into a muscle. Botulinum toxin starts to help about 1 to 2 weeks after the shot and lasts for about 3 to 6 months.

What can Botulinum toxin do for my child?

Botulinum toxin is used to treat the tight muscles in your child's neck. This helps your child in many ways. The tight muscles in your child's neck will become easier to stretch. Your child will be able to move her neck more freely and muscles on the weak side of her neck will get stronger. Botulinum toxin works differently in each child. Botulinum toxin effects are temporary. It works best if your child also has other treatments such as stretching, strengthening and positioning exercises. A Tubular Orthosis for Torticollis (TOT Collar™) may also be helpful.

How will my child receive botulinum toxin?

Usually, the doctor will inject botulinum toxin into the tight muscle. These injections feel much like immunizations, but they don't cause muscle aches. Many kids say they feel a sting or a pinch when they receive botulinum toxin. Young children who receive botulinum toxin for torticollis usually receive medicine that makes them sleep during the procedure. This is helpful because your child can receive several shots all at once and she will be perfectly still so the doctor can give the shots in just the right place.

Are there any risks or side effects from Botulinum toxin?

Botulinum toxin is safe. Even if a child receives Botulinum toxin several times, the effects don't last long. There are some side effects, though, such as bleeding or bruising where your child receives the shot. Botulinum toxin can also cause weakness in the muscle where the shot was given. Rarely, children have a rash in that area or they feel sick, like they have the flu, for a day or two. You should seek medical attention right away if your child has trouble swallowing, talking, breathing, or your child's muscles are weak and the weakness is not near the place where the shot was given.

What happens after the botulinum toxin injection?

Your child may do her normal activities right after receiving botulinum toxin. Remember, botulinum toxin effects only last 3 to 6 months. It is very important for your child to do neck exercises during this time. You will learn the exercises from your child's therapist before she receives botulinum toxin. Your child should return for a follow-up appointment 4 to 6 weeks after the procedure. The doctor will measure the results of the botulinum toxin and help you plan what to do next.

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