



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

OnabotulinumtoxinA

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Botox; Botox Cosmetic

Brand Names: Canada

Botox; Botox Cosmetic

Warning

- Severe effects of this drug may affect parts of the body away from where it was injected. Signs can happen hours to weeks after the injection. Swallowing and breathing problems can be deadly. The risk is greatest in children with certain muscle problems (spasticity) but can happen in all people. Swallowing problems may last for several months. Call your doctor right away if you have blurred eyesight or see double, change in voice, drooping eyelids, or loss of strength or weakness all over the body. Call your doctor right away if you are not able to control your bladder or have trouble breathing, speaking, or swallowing.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to lower the number of lines and wrinkles of the face and neck.
- It is used to lower underarm sweating.

- It is used to prevent migraine headaches.
- It is used to treat muscle problems around the eye.
- It is used to treat muscle problems that lead to spasms.
- It is used to treat neck pain and abnormal placement of the head due to a certain health problem called cervical dystonia.
- It is used to treat loss of bladder control in certain people.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

For all uses of this drug:

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have an infection where the shot will be given.
- If you have a disease that affects your muscles and nerves like myasthenia gravis, Lambert-Eaton syndrome, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

For loss of bladder control:

- If you have a urinary tract infection.
- If you have trouble passing urine.
- If you are not able to empty your bladder on your own.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

For all uses of this drug:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Talk with your doctor if you have had a botulinum toxin product in the last 3 or 4 months.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert or have clear eyesight until you see how this drug affects you.
- When this drug has been used for reasons it has not been approved for, severe side effects like feeling very weak and trouble swallowing have happened. Sometimes, these severe side effects have been deadly. In some cases, people already had trouble swallowing or other health problems. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug is made from human plasma (part of the blood) and may have viruses that may cause disease. This drug is screened, tested, and treated to lower the chance that it carries an infection. Talk with the doctor.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.

For loss of bladder control:

- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

For all uses of this drug:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- Change in eyesight, eye pain, or severe eye irritation.
- If bright lights bother your eyes.
- Drooping eyebrows.
- Dizziness or passing out.
- Seizures.
- Heart attack and abnormal heartbeats have happened after use of this drug. Sometimes, this has been deadly. Call your doctor right away if you have chest pain or pressure, or an abnormal heartbeat.

For loss of bladder control:

- Signs of a urinary tract infection (UTI) like blood in the urine, burning or pain when passing urine, feeling the need to pass urine often or right away, fever, lower stomach pain, or pelvic pain.
- Trouble passing urine.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Irritation where the shot is given.
- Neck pain.
- Pain in arms or legs.

- Headache.
- Less blinking.
- Dry eyes.
- Dry mouth.
- Cough.
- Flu-like signs.
- Back pain.
- Runny nose.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Mild fever.
- Upset stomach.
- Feeling sleepy.
- Signs of a common cold.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at <https://www.fda.gov/medwatch>.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- It is given as a shot.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Call the doctor for an office visit.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at <https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms>.

Last Reviewed Date

2024-11-18

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

OnabotulinumtoxinA - Last updated on December 12, 2022

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center