

Can Swallowing Difficulties From Botox for Migraines Go Away?

Botox treatment is known as an excellent anti-aging solution that smooths dynamic wrinkles and frown lines on the face. Aside from its cosmetic uses, Botox also helps some patients manage their chronic migraine headache episodes. However, some patients experience swallowing problems after the procedure which makes them wonder if it's a normal occurrence that comes with each treatment.

So are swallowing difficulties after Botox for migraine normal and does it go away? Dysphagia or swallowing problems are one of the more serious adverse events that may occur after receiving a botulinum toxin injection. It happens because the Botox injection spreads to the other parts of the face, but it should be gone on its own after a few days or weeks.

Is It Normal to Experience Difficulty Swallowing After Botox for Migraines?

Botox cosmetic injections are one of the most common aesthetic procedures in the country with about 4.4 million treatments performed in the past year. However, this injectable treatment made of botulinum toxin A wasn't always meant to erase fine lines and wrinkles on the aging skin.

Botox was originally made to help people with eyelid spasms and crossed eyes manage their condition. But with more studies and clinical trials, this muscle relaxing agent is now used for treating and managing different health conditions including chronic migraine, cerebral palsy, cervical dystonia (neck pain), muscle spasm, overactive bladder, and more.

Botox injections work in the same way no matter where it's injected. When used for migraines, it blocks the neurotransmitters from reaching the nerve endings in the neck and forehead. This results in less intense headaches and fewer headaches in a month.

But like other medical procedures, the botulinum toxin product also comes with common side effects that patients should be aware of – like muscle weakness, continued headaches, and swallowing problems.

What Causes Swallowing Problems After Botox?

Swallowing problems after repeated injections of Botox for migraines can be caused by 2 different reasons: an allergic reaction to the injection or the spread of the toxin to the associated muscles near the injection site.

Since some of the injection sites for Botox for migraines are located in the neck area, there's a chance for some of the botulinum toxin injections to migrate to the surrounding muscles like the strap muscles. This muscle allows the tongue to push and swallow the food. If the strap muscles become weak because of the excess Botox, the food can't be pushed down easily and the patient may feel like they're choking as they eat or drink.

Allergic reactions to Botox are rare, but it's a serious complication that requires immediate medical attention. Aside from difficulty swallowing, patients may also experience other symptoms of an allergic reaction, such as trouble breathing, dizziness, rashes, itching, and swelling.

To avoid this, the Botox specialist should follow the medication guide and read the important safety information Botox label before the treatment session to find out if the patient is allergic to any of the ingredients of the injectables.

Will the Side Effect Go Away on Its Own?

Most side effects of Botox for migraines go away on their own once the botulinum toxin effects wear off after a few months. Patients may experience adverse effects of Botox about 10 days after their treatment session, but it may also occur earlier. Since the excess Botox that spreads to the nearby muscles and causes swallowing problems is minimal, the symptoms may disappear after a few days or weeks once the neurotoxin has been absorbed by the body.

When to Call a Doctor

Although swallowing problems go away on their own, it's still a serious side effect of Botox for migraine that requires immediate medical help. Make sure to contact the provider immediately if the patient has a hard time drinking and swallowing or if they experience other signs of allergic reaction to Botox. In rare cases, a feeding tube might be needed to feed the patient.

The doctor can advise how to help manage swallowing problems as the patient waits for the strap muscles of the neck to become fully functional again and for the excess Botox injection to be completely absorbed by the body.

How to Avoid Difficulty Swallowing for the Next Treatment

It's understandable for patients to become more cautious and skeptical of Botox injections if they experienced difficulty swallowing after their previous treatment session. Luckily, there are a few ways to minimize the risk of dysphagia if the patient chooses to undergo Botox treatments for their chronic migraine again.

Tell the doctor about having swallowing difficulties before the next Botox treatment, regardless if it's caused by the previous round of neurotoxin injections or not. Patients who experienced dysphagia because of other reasons are more likely to experience swallowing problems again after their Botox treatment.

The Botox specialist may further customize the treatment to avoid swallowing problems. Injection sites and Botox dosage should be adjusted accordingly to avoid the recurrence of dysphagia and other side effects.

Explain the dysphagia symptoms to the doctor in great detail. It's crucial for patients to precisely describe the side effect they experienced – when they experienced it, if they choke on food or fluid, or if they needed to drink water to wash down their food. This allows doctors to determine the cause of the swallowing problems and make necessary adjustments.

What to Do If You Have a Problem With Swallowing After Botox

The first thing to do is to report the problem to the doctor or Botox provider. But like other Botox side effects, patients have to wait for the neurotoxin to break down and the symptoms to go away on their own. While waiting for the neck muscles to become fully functional again, there are a few ways for patients to help themselves like:

Take small bites of their food and chew well before swallowing.

Keep a glass of water nearby to help wash down the food when it slowly goes down the throat. Start eating soft food that is easy to swallow like yogurt, thick soups, and mashed vegetables. Make sure they have company when eating, so someone can help out immediately in case of emergency.

Make sure that patients sit up as they swallow fluids. Using a straw also makes it difficult for the liquid to spill and affect the voice box.

Call a doctor immediately if the food or liquid frequently falls into the lungs and wind pipe, as a serious infection might occur.

4 Tips to Minimize the Risk of Botox Side Effects

Swallowing problem is an unusual and serious side effect of Botox for migraine that might lead to more serious complications and side effects. They usually go away as the Botox injection is absorbed by the body, but there are also a few ways to minimize its risk of happening in the first place.

Make Sure You're Qualified for the Treatment

Botox injections are an excellent treatment to help manage chronic migraine symptoms.

However, it might not be the best procedure for everyone since it might only result in more harm than good. You're a good candidate for Botox treatments if:

Your migraine episodes happen at least 15 days in a month on average. It's unclear if Botox can help headache episodes if the attacks aren't chronic.

You're willing to undergo multiple treatment sessions every few months to manage migraine episodes.

You have good overall health with no history of health conditions that make you prone to muscle weakness, like myasthenia gravis or Lou Gehrig's disease.

Look for an Experienced Botox Specialist

Finding an experienced Botox specialist to perform the treatment is crucial when it comes to ensuring that the patient gets the best results. Their needling technique is also important to make sure that only the right amount of Botox is injected into the treatment areas, reducing the risk of developing side effects and complications.

Get the Right Amount of Botox for Your Migraine

Botox relaxes muscles in the treatment areas, but too much of this neurotoxin injection prevents them from functioning properly. The Botox provider determines how many Botox units are needed for each injection site, but most patients require about 155 units divided across 7 injection sites in the head and neck.

Take Care of the Treated Areas After the Procedure

Following aftercare tips for Botox injections ensure that patients achieve the best results while minimizing the risk of developing complications. For example, avoiding pressure on the treated areas allows the Botox to fully settle there more quickly. This reduces the risk of the toxin spreading to other associated areas, which might make it difficult for patients to eat or drink.

High-Quality Botox Treatments for Your Migraine by Ethos Spa Injectors

At Ethos Spa, we want our patients to have the ultimate Botox experience without worrying about unnatural results or possible complications. Each of our Botox procedures is performed by our highly-trained injectors using medical-grade tools and top-notch Botox products.

Expect only the best in skincare and anti-aging treatments as well as other aesthetic procedures. We're always happy to help patients achieve their dream look with the best treatment plan for their skin and body. Don't hesitate to get in touch with us now to book an appointment.