How Botox Can Help Chronic Migraine Sufferers

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Botox for Migraine Treatment

If there’s one thing migraine sufferers have in common, it’s the ‘I’m-willing-to-try-just-about-anything-to-get-rid-of-this-pain’ mentality. Worldwide, migraines are the third most common disease, but they are still one of the most mysterious conditions.

Symptoms can last anywhere from a few hours to a few days. Some people experience so much pain and discomfort they are unable to carry out normal, daily functions.

Luckily, there are different options when it comes to managing migraine pain and symptoms. There are different medications, pain relivers, relaxation techniques, lifestyle changes, and more. Using Botox for migraine treatment is another option that has become popular. It requires frequent appointments (roughly every three months), but many people claim it helps reduce their pain.

What is Botox?

Botox is made from a neurotoxin called botulinum toxin. While Botox gained popularity for cosmetic wrinkle reduction in the early 2000s, it wasn’t long before scientists realized the potential for it to treat other conditions. It is now used medically to treat certain muscular conditions by temporarily paralyzing muscles.

Botox is a prescription medicine that is injected to prevent headaches in adults with chronic migraine who have pain 15 or more days each month, with headache lasting four or more hours each day. Botox treatments for migraines are generally given once every three months over the course of a 15-month period.

Unfortunately, it’s not uncommon to go 10-14 days before seeing any improvement. Some people may not even experience relief with their first set of injections. Everyone is different, so don't compare your experience to that of others. If you find treatment isn't working, be sure to speak with your doctor about possible causes, and other treatment options.

How It Works

In 2010, the FDA approved Botox as a treatment for chronic migraine. Unfortunately Botox has not yet been proven effective in treating other types of headache, including episodic migraine, tension headaches, or cluster headaches.

Botox works to change chemical endings on nerve endings. To treat chronic migraine, Botox is injected into muscles of the forehead, the side and back of the head, and the neck and shoulders to produce a partial and temporary chemical paralysis of the muscle. This causes the muscles to be too weak to contract. The dosage used for the treatment of chronic migraine is very low because of the size of the muscles being injected.

Currently the success of Botox injections for migraine treatment can give migraine sufferers hope. In a migraine trial, when used on chronic migraine sufferers, Botox was said to reduce up to nine days of headaches each month.

Side Effects

As with any migraine treatment, there are several risks and side effects associated with Botox. After receiving treatment, it is normal to feel some pain at the injection sites.

Other common side effects of Botox injections include:

- Numbness
- Headache
- Nausea
- Neck weakness
- Flu-like sickness
- Bleeding
- Blurred vision
- Drooping of the eyelids
- Decreased eyesight
- Dry mouth
- Fatigue
- Hives
- Rashes
- Wheezing
- Swelling

In rare cases, it is possible to have an allergic reaction. If you are aware of pre-existing allergies, speak to your doctor beforehand. If you begin to experience symptoms of an allergic reaction, such as hives or shortness of breath, seek immediate medical attention.

Cost

While the cost of Botox injections vary depending on where you live and who is administering the injection, the good news is that many insurance providers now cover the cost of Botox if it is being used to treat chronic migraines and you have a prescription from your doctor.

Generally, you can expect to pay between $300 and $600 per treatment. This will vary depending on your individual treatment plan, but you can ask for quotes and estimates in advance.

Is Botox Right for You?

Have you tried several different migraine treatment options without success? Do you have a minimum of 15 days with migraine headaches every month? While doctors may not recommend Botox as a form of treatment until other treatment options have been unsuccessful, it may be a better option if you don’t tolerate migraine medication well.

Because Botox hasn’t been proven effective in the treatment of generic headaches or episodic migraines, you must meet the criteria of a ‘chronic migraine sufferer’ to be considered for Botox treatments. Talk to your doctor about Botox as an option to see if it may work for you.

Alternative Treatment Options

Botox is often a last resort for migraine sufferers. Have you exhausted all of your treatment options? Medicinal

and alternative treatment options for migraine include:

- Preventative medication to prevent migraine pain and symptoms
- Pain medication to alleviate migraine pain and symptoms
- Acupuncture
- Acupressure points for headaches
- Chiropractic
- Massage therapy
- Craniosacral therapy
- Supplements (such as butterbur and feverfew)
- CBT

Conclusion

If you have tried several of the above migraine treatment options without success, Botox might be something worth trying. After all, when migraine-free days are possible, you've got nothing to lose!