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# Botox for Migraines



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Suffer from chronic migraines? Botox might help. Botox has long been used "off-label" for this purpose but thanks to recent FDA-approval it's probably going to become more mainstream. I asked Mitch Chasin, MD, medical director of Reflections Center for Skin and Body, to explain more:

## Q. How does having FDA-approval change things for patients?

A. It makes it more likely that using Botox to prevent migraines will be covered by insurance. This will be a big factor in whether or not some people can afford the procedure, which typically costs around \$1500 each time it's administered. Also, people are generally more comfortable with a treatment when it's been FDA approved, so I expect demand for the procedure to increase.

## Q. Does Botox really work for migraines? Why?

A. In my experience yes, most patients notice a significant improvement. It's not clear why Botox works to prevent migraines, but then again it's unclear what causes migraines in the first place. There are some who suspect Botox creates a neurochemical reaction in the nerve endings that interferes with migraines, but the exact mechanism of action is unknown. I think as it becomes more widely recognized as a migraine fighter, Botox will become the gold standard of prevention.



## Q. How many sessions do you need to get relief?

A. Botox should be considered a preventative measure, not a way to alleviate migraine symptoms once they've begun. Someone suffering from chronic migraines will have multiple episodes in a week, and the goal is to prevent these episodes from occurring and to minimize the severity when they do. The patient should begin to see the frequency and the intensity of their migraines decrease significantly within 48 hours of their first Botox treatment. These results continue to improve in some patients after their second treatment, which usually happens four months after the first.

## Q. Where exactly is the Botox injected?

A. Depending on the nature of the migraine, Botox can be injected in up to 31 locations, including the forehead, scalp, shoulders and neck.

## Q. Are there any downsides?

A. Side effects are rare and mostly cosmetic, with the most common being a lowering of the brow as well as the drooping of the eyelids. Temporary bruising is also a possibility. Other more rare side effects include muscle aches or worsening of headaches, which is especially possible when Botox is injected while the patient is actively suffering from a migraine.

—Barbara Brody, Health Editor

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