

## Botulinum toxin A for treating blepharospasm or hemifacial spasm

### WHAT DOES THE GUIDANCE SAY?

Botulinum toxin A (Botox) is recommended for listing on the Medication Assistance Fund (MAF) for government subsidy for adults with blepharospasm or hemifacial spasm.

### WHAT IS BLEPHAROSPASM?

Blepharospasm is an abnormal, involuntary contraction of the muscles surrounding the eyes. Frequent blinking or uncontrollable eye closure are typical symptoms. In severe cases, a person may be unable to open their eyes for several minutes.

The exact cause of blepharospasm is unknown, but the condition is thought to be linked to a chemical imbalance in the part of the brain that controls facial movement.

### WHAT IS HEMIFACIAL SPASM?

Hemifacial spasm is an involuntary contraction of the muscles on one side of the face. It usually affects muscles around one eye along with muscles in the cheek, mouth and neck on the same side of the face. Most cases of hemifacial spasm are thought to be caused by a blood vessel pressing on the nerve controlling muscles of the face.

### WHAT IS BOTULINUM TOXIN A?

You may know botulinum toxin A as Botox<sup>®</sup>, Dysport<sup>®</sup> or Xeomin<sup>®</sup>. It is given as a series of injections to help relax muscle contractions around the eyes and at other parts of the face.

### HOW MUCH BOTULINUM TOXIN A CAN I TAKE?

Your doctor will administer botulinum toxin A injections at affected areas at the required dose. The effects of the injection will start to work within a few days.

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### HOW LONG SHOULD I TAKE IT?

The effect of each botulinum toxin A injection usually lasts for about three months before wearing off. If you want to maintain the effect, you will need regular follow-up injections. Most people with blepharospasm or hemifacial spasm repeat their injections around every three months.

### WHO CAN HAVE BOTULINUM TOXIN A?

Adults can apply for botulinum toxin A (Botox) through MAF if they have blepharospasm or hemifacial spasm.

Your doctor can advise if Botox is a suitable treatment for you.

### WHY WAS BOTULINUM TOXIN A RECOMMENDED FOR MAF?

ACE evaluates how well a treatment works in relation to how much it costs compared to other treatments. Botulinum toxin A (Botox) was recommended for subsidy because its benefit in relieving symptoms and improving quality of life for adults with blepharospasm or hemifacial spasm justifies its cost.

The other brands of botulinum toxin A (Dysport and Xeomin) were not recommended for subsidy.

### WHAT DOES LISTING ON THE MAF MEAN FOR ME?

The MAF helps people pay for expensive treatments that are clinically necessary. If your doctor prescribes botulinum toxin type A (Botox) for you, and you meet the MAF criteria, your treatment cost will be subsidised by 40% to 75%.

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