Caring for Your Child
Botox Treatment for Chronic Migraines

Since your child has tried a few oral preventive medications for Chronic Migraine without benefit, another option for preventive therapy would be Botox injections.

What does "Chronic Migraine" mean?
Chronic migraine is defined as 15 or more headache days per month for at least 3 months. Migraine symptoms like throbbing pain, nausea, vomiting, or sensitivity to light and sound must be present with some of those headaches, but do not need to occur with all headaches.

Why Botox?
Botox (the same medication used for wrinkles) was approved for Chronic Migraine treatment, for patients 18 years and older, by the FDA in 2010, and it has been used off-label for children with Chronic Migraine for years.

How does it work?
We do not know for sure. One possibility is that the medicine works by tracking back through the nerves that carry pain messages to turn off pain signals in the brainstem. Because the Botox works at and near the site of injection, it does not usually cause side effects like sedation, thinking problems, or mood changes.

What can I expect?
To use Botox for Chronic Migraine, your headache specialist will inject a very small amount of medication into 30 or more spots on the forehead, sides of the head, neck, and shoulders. The benefits can start as soon as 1-2 weeks after injections, and usually last until about 12 weeks after the injections. If it helps your child, we will repeat the injections every 12 weeks until headaches are well-controlled. If it does not help on the first try, we usually recommend repeating the injections once 12 weeks later, since some patients who were not helped the first time do see benefit after repeated injections.

What are the possible side effects?
- Some children are very anxious about the injections. If you think your child will be anxious please discuss this with your doctor before the Botox injection visit.
- The injections can be uncomfortable, sometimes painful where the headache is severe. This initial discomfort lasts just a few minutes.
Some patients experience a worsening of head and neck pain for the first few days after the injections. To prevent this, your child should use ice and an anti-inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen (Aleve) for a few days after the procedure, and should avoid carrying a backpack until the neck/shoulder pain is resolved.

Other side effects can include droopy eyelid and weakness of chewing muscles or neck muscles. When present these side effects are usually mild, and wear off when the medication wears off at 12 weeks.

Any injection carries a small risk of bleeding or infection. If your child develops signs of infection like warmth, swelling, redness, or pain at the injection site you should contact your doctor immediately.

There have been rare cases of more serious breathing or swallowing problems when Botox was used for tight muscles or salivary problems in children with cerebral palsy.

**How can we get Botox for my child?**

When you tell us that you would like your child to try Botox injections, we will start the following process:

1. Your doctor will write a letter of medical necessity to your insurance company to ask that they cover the medication and procedure. Please note that even if Botox is covered you may have to pay a co-pay for the procedure, the medication, or both.
2. If approved, one of our office coordinators will be in contact with you and your insurance's specialty pharmacy to arrange delivery of the medication to CHOP Neurology.
3. The pharmacy will contact you to authorize the shipment. Please call the pharmacy back immediately to prevent delay in care.
4. Our office coordinators will provide you with updates, or you may contact them at 215-590-1719. If you have questions you may also contact your insurance company.
5. Each time Botox is ordered, Steps 2-4 will be repeated. Please make sure to clear any issues (i.e., outstanding balances) with your insurance company well before the planned injection visit. We cannot stress this enough as it delays your child’s treatment.

**When will this happen?**

The initial approval process usually takes one month. We will schedule the visit for injection once we know that the medication is being shipped. At that same time we will also schedule a follow-up visit with your primary neurologist for 4-8 weeks after the injections to discuss the response to the treatment.

**What other options do we have?**

If Botox is denied, or if you or your child decide not to have Botox injections for Chronic Migraine, other options would include oral preventive medications. These should be discussed with your primary neurologist.