

## Understanding Botox for Chronic Migraines

Botox, or onabotulinumtoxin A, is an FDA approved treatment for chronic migraines. Botox has been proven to decrease the number of headache days, decrease hours of headache, and improve overall daily function.

Botox is believed to work for migraine by blocking pain-signaling transmission between the head and neck to the brain where migraine is generated.

Botox is not a cure for migraines. Rather, it is a proven treatment to reduce headache and improve function.

Here at East Bay Neurology, we use the Botox injection protocol that was studied in the original clinical trials of Botox for chronic migraine. The developed and tested protocol is 31 injections of 5 units each which are given in locations over the forehead, side of the head, back of the head and neck. The injections are just under the skin and usually not visible after a few hours. The protocol is repeated every 3 months.

Botox is usually very well tolerated among patients. There are usually no systemic side effects and it does not really interact with your other medications. However, in the original studies, the most common side effects reported were neck pain, headache, eyelid drooping and muscle pain. Soreness, if any, usually resolves within a few hours to a 1-2 days. Patients typically notice they cannot wrinkle their forehead after Botox injections, and can again do so after it wears off.

The procedure usually takes 10-15 minutes, and afterwards patients are able to drive home and resume normal activity. Strenuous neck exercise, hair dyes or other hair interventions are not recommended for the first 24 hours after injections.

Botox will not work immediately. It can take up to 4 weeks after injections to notice benefit although many may see benefits sooner. Additionally, there is evidence that suggests Botox has a cumulative effect, with better responses with subsequent injection cycles. Some patient may need 2 to 3 full cycles of Botox treatments to start seeing a full response.



## The Authorization Process for Botox

Understanding Botox insurance authorization is quite complex. We hope we can simplify some things for you by explaining how this process works.

All Botox procedures first require insurance authorization. Some insurances require we obtain your Botox from a specific specialty pharmacy in the country, which creates a further layer of complexity and will delay the day you are actually able to receive Botox. Please look at the graph below to better understand the process. It can often take over a month before Botox is actually able to be given to you.

**COST:** The estimated cost of Botox is unfortunately difficult to determine and varies tremendously from person to person. Factors including insurance policy, current year deductibles, pharmacy benefits, all play a role in determining your individualized cost. Unfortunately, we cannot tell you what the exact cost will be. We ourselves never know the cost until after the botox has already been given and insurance gives their explanation of benefits (which can take sometimes 30-60 days after botox is given). The best way to find this information out is to call your insurance and personally ask **ONLY AFTER** Botox has been authorized/approved.

