



HEMIFACIAL SPASM BLEPHAROSPASM



HEMIFACIAL SPASM

Hemifacial spasm is a condition that affects half of the face. It usually starts with a twitching around the eye and may also involve the mouth. The facial nerve carries the signals from the brain to control the muscles of the face. It starts deep within the brain and makes its way to the face.

If something presses on the nerve somewhere along its course, it can affect how the signals are carried to the face. This may cause muscles to twitch (or contract), or go into spasm. Although the condition is not fatal, it can affect the quality of life.

How common is it?

Hemifacial spasm is a rare condition. It affects men and women, although women tend to be affected slightly more often than men. Symptoms usually start in middle age.

What causes hemifacial spasm?

The cause of hemifacial spasm is not fully understood. It is believed that the main cause is, pressure on the facial nerve from a structure or abnormality within the brain. The most common finding is a blood vessel at the base of the brain, pressing on the nerve. There are other, rare causes too, such as infections or strokes. In some cases, when no obvious cause is known, it is known as idiopathic hemifacial spasm.

Is there anything I can do to help myself?

Learning relaxation techniques may benefit some people. Educating yourself about your condition and staying positive can also help.

What are the symptoms of hemifacial spasm?

Twitching usually begins around the eye. At first the twitching spasms may come and go. Gradually the spasms become worse and may become permanent. The left side is more often affected than the right. The twitches may spread to involve other muscles on the same side of the face. The mouth and jaw are often involved. The corner of the mouth can become pulled up by spasm. Some people also hear a clicking sound on the side that is affected when the spasm comes. Some people may have a quite mild condition that causes inconvenience and embarrassment. Others find the spasms may affect their vision.

For some people the spasms may become worse when they are tired and stressed. They may also improve when they lie down.

What treatments are available for hemifacial spasm?

Medicines

These can be helpful when the spasms are mild or infrequent. Anti-epileptic medicines can be helpful in some people. They will need to be taken for a long-term.

Injections

Injection of botulinum toxin is given to the overacting muscles.

Surgery

Surgery is usually reserved for very severe cases as it is associated with serious side effects.

What is the outlook?

Hemifacial spasm is usually a long-term condition. It is not fatal but may affect your quality of life. It very rarely improves completely without treatment.

BLEPHAROSPASM

What is Blepharospasm?

Blepharospasm is an abnormal, involuntary blinking or spasm of the eyelids.

What causes Blepharospasm?

Blepharospasm is associated with an abnormal function of the part of the brain responsible for controlling the muscles. The cause for this is unknown, rarely heredity may play a role in the development of blepharospasm. Reflex blepharospasm may occur due to dryness of the eyes.

What are the symptoms of Blepharospasm?

Most people develop blepharospasm without any warning symptoms. It may begin with a gradual increase in blinking or eye irritation. Some people may also experience fatigue, emotional tension, or sensitivity to bright light. As the condition progresses, the symptoms become more frequent, and facial spasms may develop. Blepharospasm may decrease or cease while a person is sleeping or concentrating on a specific task.

What is botulinum toxin?

Botulinum toxin is produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. It is usually associated with causing botulism (food poisoning) but, when it is used in controlled doses, it is safely used to relax excessive muscle contraction.

A local anesthetic cream is applied first. The injection is given into the facial muscles after about 45 minutes. The dose of injection is titrated based on the patient's requirement. The injection starts to work within a few days and the effect commonly lasts for four to five months. About 7-8 people out of 10 with hemifacial spasm and blepharospasm are helped by botulinum injections. There can be side-effects of the injection. These are commonly drooping of the eyelid and double vision. They usually wear off after 1 or 2 weeks.

How is Blepharospasm treated?

Reflex blepharospasm is usually relieved with drops. There is no successful cure for essential blepharospasm, although several treatment options can reduce its severity. The injection of botulinum toxin into the muscles of the eyelids is an approved treatment for blepharospasm. Medications taken by mouth for blepharospasm are available but usually produce unpredictable results. Any symptom relief is usually short term and tends to be helpful in only 15 percent of the cases. Myectomy, a surgical procedure to remove some of the muscles and nerves of the eyelids, is also a possible treatment option. This surgery improves symptoms in 75 to 85 percent of people with blepharospasm. The surgery can decrease the dose and frequency of the botulinum toxin injections, but some injections will still be required.

For more information log onto:
www.blepharospasm.org

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