



After Your Injection...

Spasmodic Dysphonia

You have just undergone an injection with Botox for spasmodic dysphonia (SD) present in your voicebox. For a few days, you may notice slight soreness in the area of your larynx, and perhaps a small bruise on the front of your neck. For the next 3 months (the average time before you will need another injection) you will go through the stages summarized below.

In case of questions or to make your next appointment, do not hesitate to call our office.

() **ADductor SD (The strained-strangled voice)**

- **The initial wait:** For a day or two your voice will usually be unchanged. Approximately 24-72 hours from the injection the spasms begin to diminish and the voice may be very good. Within a few hours the voice may become weak and breathy. Many wonder why this breathiness develops. As the medicine begins to take effect, just a part of the muscle in the vocal folds is weak, while a short time later, when the injection has taken complete effect, most or all of the muscle will be weakened, thereby weakening your voice. Some persons experience what seems more like hoarseness (or Mickey Mouse voice) than weakness during the first few days after an injection.
- **The weak-breathy voice phase:** This phase lasts as little as a few days or as long as 8 weeks. During this phase, you will notice that your voice is weak and cannot be heard in competition with background noise. You may find that you have to take a breath frequently when you talk, because you run out of air so quickly. The voice may sound whispery and airy. A few people will also tend to cough on liquids—a side effect that tends to resolve faster than the breathy voice. If this swallowing problem happens to you, use extra care when drinking liquids, utilize thick liquids when possible, and try tucking your chin towards your chest when you drink.
- **The talking is golden phase:** For 1-3 months after the weak-breathy phase has passed, the voice often seems virtually normal. Talking is a pleasure, and some forget they even have SD during this time.
- **The spasms are back phase:** Typically, during the 2nd to 4th month after your injection, just when the voice seems at its best, a spasm may occur. It may not be necessary to return immediately for another injection, because you may still have several to many weeks of reasonable vocal function. As spasms become more noticeable, you should consult your calendar and arrange another injection appointment.

() **ABductor SD (The intermittent whisper voice)**

- **The initial wait:** For a day or two, your voice will usually be unchanged. Approximately 24-72 hours from the injection, the spasms begin to diminish and the voice may be stronger and steadier. At the same time you may (but not necessarily) start to experience some shortness of breath. In other words, the breathing symptoms may not happen at all; they may be subtle; or they could be very noticeable and even uncomfortable and anxiety-provoking.
- **The better voice but I'm short of breath phase:** This phase may last from a few days up to many weeks. Again, some don't experience any shortness of breath. During this phase, you will notice that your voice is better, even though some spasms remain. You may also experience some involuntary vocal sounds when you breathe in suddenly.
- **The spasms are increasing phase:** Typically during the 2nd to 4th month after your injection, you may find that your voice is again worsening. When you notice this happening, you may not need to return immediately for another injection, because you may still have several to many weeks of reasonable vocal function. As spasms become more noticeable, you should consult your calendar and arrange another injection appointment.
- **The unsatisfying response:** Achieving a good result for ABductor SD can be more difficult than for ADductor SD.

General Advice

- **Variability of results between injections:** No two injections will yield exactly the same results, even if the technique of injection and dose are kept the same. This may relate, among other things, to small, unavoidable differences in placement of the medication within the small vocal fold muscles.
- **Variability between yours and another person's results:** Some wonder why another person with SD achieves a longer benefit or has less initial side effects. This is because each individual's response is determined not only by the dosage and placement, but also by differences in sensitivity to the medication. This does not seem to be related to size, weight or severity of the illness. Some fortunate individuals benefit for considerably longer than others. A few others consistently develop recurrent spasms very quickly after injections, even when the dose is increased to high levels. Furthermore, in the same way, some patients repeatedly develop excessive initial breathiness, even if the dosage of Botox is reduced to very small levels.
- **Abrupt worsening of symptoms:** Colds, coughing, vomiting, and extensive crying all seem to shorten the duration of benefit of Botox. This can happen to someone who normally has a very long response to an injection. If your symptoms become severe enough, you may come in sooner for your next injection.
- **The unsatisfying response:** Occasionally, an individual wonders if the injection is worth the bother. Perhaps early breathiness was severe and prolonged. Maybe there was an annoying degree of coughing on liquids. The duration of benefit may have been disappointingly short. Should any of these be your experience, keep in mind that alterations of technique, dosage, timing of injections, and so forth, may help to achieve a better response in the future.

Information Sources

Keep in mind when reading the sources listed below or using a search engine to find www pages on SD, they reference pages of many different people with diverse opinions. Indeed, everyone who has an opinion may state it on the www, no matter how far-fetched. There are no referees to certify the validity of the opinion. Digest what you read with a grain of salt and feel free to discuss what you read with me.

<http://www.dysphonia.org/> provides information on this family of disorders and point out many sites for reading. A newsletter is provided by the:

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