While Botox (botulinum toxin) is generally known as a drug used for cosmetic surgeries, it also has important medical uses. For example, Botox can be given to children with cerebral palsy to reduce muscle spasticity.

How does Botox work?

Botox blocks nerve signals that tell muscles to contract or tighten, thereby providing relief from symptoms like pain and muscle stiffness. Physicians can inject Botox directly into affected muscle groups. If the patient or family requests it, a drug called *oral versed* can be given before the procedure to reduce anxiety and awareness.

After the injections, patients can resume normal activity. In some cases, physicians will recommend serial casting to help stretch the muscles, or changes in physical therapy routines in order to better meet the goals of treatment.

Patients usually see results within five days, with maximum benefit at three-four weeks after the injections. Some relief may be maintained for over three months, but the effects will gradually fade. After three months, another treatment can be given.

What are the side effects of Botox?

The most common side effects of Botox, which occur in fewer than 10 percent of patients, are:

- Temporary general weakness
- Temporary weakness in the area where Botox was injected

- Lack of coordination in the legs or proneness to falling (if Botox was injected in the legs)
- Temporary pain near the site of injection
- Infection near the site of injection

Botox should not be given if a patient has a fever, cough, or other symptoms of cold/flu, has received immunizations within the past week, is scheduled to receive immunizations within a week after Botox injection, or is pregnant or breastfeeding.

Learn More

- [Rady Children's Hospital] Botox for Cerebral Palsy
- Botox for Lower-Extremity Spasticity