



# County of Kern Point of Service (POS) Plan

## A County Employee/Retiree Medical Benefit Plan

### Authorization Criteria for Botox Treatments

Botox is a drug made from a bacteria toxin called Clostridium botulinum. It is the same toxin that causes botulism, a life-threatening type of food poisoning. Doctors use it in small doses for both cosmetic and medical reasons. Cosmetically, it's used to temporarily smooth facial wrinkles and improve your appearance. Medically, it's used to treat the following health problems:

- Benign Essential Blepharospasm (abnormal blinking or spasms of the eyelids)
- Cervical dystonia (a nerve disorder causing severe neck and shoulder contractions)
- Strabismus - misaligned eyes
- Chronic Migraine
- Severe underarm sweating
- Overactive bladder
- Limb spasticity conditions (cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, stroke or brain injury)

Botox, botulinum toxin, is a neurotoxic protein that works by relaxing or paralyzing certain muscles and blocking nerve impulses. Despite the many positive benefits of Botox, there are also risks associated with it. The most common side effects are pain, swelling or bruising at the injection site. Flu-like symptoms, headache and upset stomach may also occur. Life-threatening side effects include problems breathing, talking or swallowing. The toxin could also spread from the injection site to other areas of the body, resulting in a deadly case of botulism. The main symptoms of botulism are loss of strength and muscle weakness all over the body. These problems can happen hours, days or even weeks after a Botox injection. Because of these risks, the FDA mandates that patients should be warned of the potential adverse effects and receive an FDA-approved handout at every treatment session. Pregnant or breastfeeding women should not use Botox.

#### ***Blepharospasms***

Most requests for Botox therapy are to treat eye twitches that are being diagnosed as blepharospasms. However, true Benign Essential Blepharospasm (BEB) is a rare nerve disorder and must not be confused with common blinking disorders or temporary eye twitching that can be caused by fatigue, stress or caffeine. BEB only affects an estimated 20,000 - 50,000 people in the US. Symptoms usually appear in mid- to late adulthood and gradually worsen. As the condition progresses, spasms of the muscles surrounding the eyes cause involuntary squinting or blinking. This may lead to functional blindness due to an inability to keep their eyes open. Patients with BEB often appear as if they are squeezing their eyes shut.

All requests for Botox injections to treat a diagnosis of blepharospasms will require physician evaluation for medical necessity. For approval, the following criteria must be met:

- Clinical documentation of correct diagnosis
- Evaluation by a Neurological Specialist
- Failure of conservative treatment after a two month period. Conservative therapy may include wearing tinted, UV blocking sunglasses and use of artificial tears.
- Video of the blepharospasm

Patient education is an important part of a comprehensive therapeutic approach to BEB. The Benign Essential Blepharospasm Research Foundation promotes awareness, organizes support groups, obtains funding for research and education, and is an excellent source of information for patients with BEB. Patients can request a free information packet at [www.blepharospasm.org](http://www.blepharospasm.org), as well as access many on-line resources such as publications and videos.

## ***Migraines***

Migraines are a neurological disease that consist of a collection of symptoms which include throbbing pain on one or both sides of the head lasting between 4 and 72 hours. They are often accompanied by one or more of the following: visual disturbances, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, extreme sensitivity to light, sound, touch and smell and tingling or numbness in the face or extremities. The World Health Organization ranks migraine 19th among causes for years lived with disability.

In the case of migraine prevention, Botox was FDA approved for the prevention of chronic migraine in July 2010. Chronic migraine is defined as 15 or more headache days per month, for 3 or more months, as opposed to episodic migraine, which is characterized by 0-14 headache days per month. Botox is not effective or approved for tension, cluster or episodic migraine headaches.

Approximately 2.5% of those with episodic migraine progress to chronic migraine. Obesity, depression, medication overuse (over the counter and prescription) and caffeine consumption increase one's risk of progression to chronic migraine. Weight management, screening and treating for depression, reducing medication usage and reducing caffeine consumption are all components to optimizing care.

If Botox is being requested to prevent migraine headaches, all of the following criteria must be met:

- Diagnosis of **chronic migraine** (15 headache days per month, lasting 4 hours per day or longer) AND
- Failure to respond to at least 3 classes of migraine medications for at least 2 months duration for each medication:
  - Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors/angiotensin II receptor blockers (losartan, valsartan, lisinopril)
  - Anti-depressants (amitriptyline, clomipramine, doxepin, mirtazapine, nortriptyline, protriptyline)
  - Anti-epileptics (gabapentin, topiramate, valproic acid)
  - Beta blockers (atenolol, metoprolol, nadolol, propranolol, timolol)
  - Calcium channel blockers (diltiazem, nifedipine, nimodipine, verapamil)
  - Imitrex

The following organizations can provide additional information about migraine treatment, research and support:

Alliance for Headache Disorders Advocacy: [www.allianceforheadacheadvocacy.org](http://www.allianceforheadacheadvocacy.org)

American Council for Headache Education: [www.achenet.org](http://www.achenet.org)

American Headache Society: [www.AmericanHeadacheSociety.org](http://www.AmericanHeadacheSociety.org)

Association of Migraine Disorders: [www.migrainedisorders.org](http://www.migrainedisorders.org)

Migraine Research Foundation: [www.migraineresearchfoundation.org](http://www.migraineresearchfoundation.org)

National Headache Foundation: [www.headaches.org](http://www.headaches.org)

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), part of National Institutes of Health: [www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/migraine/migraine.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/migraine/migraine.htm)