

Risks of BTX and pets in the home

Learn more, live better. A Canadian dermatologist answers your questions.



Q What are the side effects of Botulinum toxin A (BTX) treatments?

A Botulinum toxin A has been around for 20 years now, and millions of people worldwide have been treated safely and effectively with it for a variety of medical and cosmetic conditions. It has been used to alleviate wrinkles, excessive sweating, migraines, spasticity and cerebral palsy, blepharospasm (muscle contraction in the eyelid) and urinary incontinence, to name just a few.

Dermatologists typically use Botulinum toxin A cosmetically—for wrinkles and excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis)—so I'll focus on the potential side effects for these indications.

In terms of wrinkles, Botulinum toxin A can be used to reduce the frown area between the eyes, crow's feet beside the eyes and horizontal lines in the forehead. With cosmetic use, potential though uncommon side effects include a headache or a localized tiny purple bruise. Rarely, individuals develop a temporary eyelid or eyebrow droop. In addition, some patients have complained about looking "frozen" or "surprised."

With the use of Botulinum toxin A for excessive sweating, the main side

effects include discomfort at time of treatment and occasional temporary small bruises.

The risks of these effects are greatly minimized by relying on skilled specialists, such as dermatologists, for these treatments. The dermatologist should have the expertise to optimize results and minimize side effects.

Q Should I worry about buying a pet for our home if our child has sensitive skin?

A It is important for your child to be assessed by a dermatologist for a proper diagnosis and treatment plan. In some cases, a bit more knowledge about proper bathing, moisturizing, clothing selection and humidification can be sufficient to manage a child's sensitive skin.

Children who are sensitive or allergic to certain foods or environmental allergens such as dust, mould or ragweed may have an atopic diathesis. These children are allergy-prone, and their skin and airways can be affected by pets. An allergist will help determine whether your child currently has an animal allergy by performing skin-prick testing on the forearms. If your child is found to be allergic, it is not a good idea to bring a pet into the home.

If you do decide to get a pet, all of

your children, regardless of their ages, need to be taught that certain activities—even those intended as play—can lead to bites and scratches. These can sometimes have serious consequences and may require medical attention.

Furred pets should be checked regularly for fleas, and treated routinely. This will prevent flea bites to the human members of the family. **CS**

Dr. Benjamin Barankin is a Toronto dermatologist and Medical Director of the Toronto Dermatology Centre (www.torontodermatologycentre.com).

Have more questions?

Watch for our experts in your area this year. The CSPA runs information sessions around the country throughout the year on various topics. Check out the CSPA website at www.canadianskin.ca for the full schedule of events.



If you would like to have your questions answered by our CSPA medical advisors, please contact us at: Canadian Skin Patient Alliance, 2446 Bank Street, Suite 383, Ottawa, Ontario K1V 1A8 or www.canadianskin.ca or check us out on Facebook and Twitter. **f** **t**