**Fact Sheet**

Spasmodic Dysphonia (SD)  
Laryngeal Dystonia

SD is a localized type of a neuromuscular disorder, which is also called laryngeal (voice box) dystonia (abnormal tone in the voicebox). Dystonia may be localized, such as affecting just the voice box or hoarse, regional, affecting multiple areas (such as the voice box, jaw, throat or tongue) or generalized, affecting all the muscles in the body.  If you have been diagnosed with SD, some cases only affect the voice box.  These are more localized cases.  The second type is called "diffuse SD" (affecting the same area for one letter) where the voice box is tight, strained, and shaking. The second type is called "diffuse SD" (affecting the entire body, or the whole body) which is the most common form. The most important thing to remember about this type of neuromuscular disorder is that it is NOT like Lou Gerig's Disease (ALS), and you will NOT die from it.  SD can severely impact your voice but it is otherwise not dangerous.  It is possible for the disease to change, particularly from adductor to abductor type every many years, but it does not progress from a localized to a generalized problem.

Can SD be treated with medications or voice therapy?

Yes and no.  SD is a real disorder, it is not in your head.  Unfortunately, speech therapy is not an effective form of treatment.  SD can be successfully treated with a medicine called botulinum toxin (BoTox).  BoTox must be injected to work, it does not help.  This is the same Botox that cosmetic surgeons inject into the face to reduce wrinkles.  The vocal folds are a little different, and the way the body disposes of the BoTox (just like in the face), and must be re-injected.  They usually last for 2-4 months before your body digestes the BoTox (just like in the face), and must be re-injected.  Or, what if I get no results the first time being injected?  Or, between my results and someone else's?

Typically injections give a very good voice for 2-4 months.  When a stronger dose is used, most people may have more side effects in the beginning (as outlined above), but the injection benefit may last longer.  Your goal is to give you the longest relief, with the fewest side effects.  This takes about 6-10 injections until we adjust your dose to suit your needs.  Injections go into the vocal folds, and are safe, comfortable and quick.  They usually last for 2-4 months before your body digests the BoTox (just like in the face), and must be re-injected.

What happens after an injection?

“Initial wait phase.”  For the first day or two your voice will not significantly change.  BoTox takes several days to begin working.  After the first few days you may notice a change in the quality of your voice.  There are several side effects of BoTox that you may or may not notice during the first week.  If you have adductor SD (tightly closed), your voice may become very weak and breathy for the first few days, up to a week or two.  This is not uncommon, but it should resolve after the first week.  If lasts more than a few weeks then it means that you are sensitive to BoTox, and your next injection needs to be delayed.  Or, you may notice that your voice is much improved, but that you have a little hoarseness when exercising or going up stairs.  This happens to everyone to a varying degree and it may be a little scary at first, but is generally not serious.  It usually lasts from a few days to a few months.  If it is too uncomfortable, your next injection can be a little weaker.  With both types, you may notice some slight throat tightening.  These should also be sketched in.  Every patient will receive a call from our office to minimize the side effects and to see how sensitive you are to BoTox.  Do not worry, this is a learning process where we adjust many factors to get the most success.