

Medial branch blocks



Information for patients

Pain Management Service



As part of your treatment your doctor has suggested that a procedure called medial branch blocks may help us diagnose the location of your pain. We have written this leaflet to explain this procedure and to answer some of the questions people have about it. It is impossible for this kind of leaflet to cover all the information about medial branch blocks that you may need or want. However, we hope that you will find it helps to remind you about things you have already been told.

If, after reading this leaflet, you are unclear about anything or would like more information then please ask us when you come in for treatment or contact the Pain Clinic between 9.00am - 5.00pm, Monday to Friday on:

- **0114 271 2493**

Do I need to stay overnight in hospital to have medial branch blocks?

Not usually, however, we ask everyone to bring an overnight bag in with them as we find people are more comfortable wearing their own nightwear, slippers and dressing gown. Plus, if you do need to be admitted, as can sometimes happen, then you also have everything you need.

What is a medial branch?

The length of the spine is made up of small joints called facets. These joints are where the bones of the spine overlap each other. Medial branches are a group of very small nerves that carry pain signals from the facet joints in the spine.

How do medial branch blocks work?

We can use a medial branch block to help diagnose the location of your pain. Blocking or numbing these medial branch nerves by injecting a local anaesthetic may also temporarily reduce the pain for a short period of time. Your doctor will explain the treatment in more detail before asking you to sign the consent form. Only sign the consent form if you are completely sure you understand the treatment you are having. If you are unsure of anything, ask someone to explain it again. There will also be the chance to discuss any other treatments that may be available.

How are medial branch blocks performed?

This treatment is carried out in the X-ray department or Day Case Centre. We will take you from the Pain Clinic to the X-ray department on a chair or trolley. If you are admitted to the Day Case Centre then we use a small theatre to carry out the procedure. We carry out the treatment using X-rays to guide us. X-rays help the doctor to see exactly where the needle is placed.

We will take your blood pressure and pulse throughout the treatment and for a short time afterwards.

Will it hurt?

You may have some discomfort, but your doctor will numb the area of skin first, by injecting a local anaesthetic. This may sting for a few seconds but may help reduce any discomfort. We will do the medial branch block injections once the local anaesthetic is working. If during the treatment you feel uncomfortable, let the doctor or nurse know and they will try to make you more comfortable.

What happens after my treatment?

After your treatment a number of things happen. First, we will bring you back to the recovery area in the Day Case Centre. When you are recovered, you will be able to have something to eat and drink and then you can go home. You will have a small dressing on the area that has been treated that you can take off the following day.

How will I feel after the treatment?

Immediately after the injections, you may feel a reduction in your pain. This is due to the local anaesthetic injected. If you do have a reduction in pain it may only last for a few hours.

Are there any risks or side effects?

As with any treatment there are risks or side effects. The doctor will discuss these more fully with you before you sign your consent form.

What should I look out for when I go home?

Infection

Anyone having an injection through the skin is at risk of infection. This is very rare but some of the signs of infection include:

- redness, swelling and heat around the injection site
- increased temperature
- generally feeling unwell
- unpleasant coloured discharge

Increase in pain

- It is not unusual for you to experience an increase in your pain or for your pain to remain the same
- Take your painkillers as normal
- Apply heat/cold to the affected area
- Try to keep active

Who should I contact if I have any concerns?

If you have any concerns please contact the Pain Clinic on:

- **0114 271 2493** (Monday to Friday, 9.00am - 5.00pm)

or contact your GP.

Going home after treatment

Please remember, you will need someone to collect you from the Day Case Centre after the treatment, because you may feel unsteady on your feet.

We recommend that for the first 24 hours after your treatment you:

- do not drive
- do not take public transport alone
- do not drink alcohol
- have someone stay with you overnight
- take 24-48 hours off work.

What should I expect after the treatment?

Remember that medial branch blocks are not expected to ease your pain for a long period but may help us to diagnose the type of pain that you may be experiencing.

In order for us to gain a full understanding about how this treatment has worked for you, we ask you to complete a sheet to record your pain level for the 24-hour period afterwards. This will be explained to you before you leave.

After 24 hours please send the completed score sheet back to the Pain Clinic in the envelope provided. The doctor will then be able to review the form and arrange your next appointment.

What if I would like more information?

This information can be used to remind you about things you have already been told. It does not mean you cannot ask further questions or ask for reassurance about anything that may be worrying you. We aim for you to be kept informed about your treatments and understand what they mean.



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