

Nerve root injections



Information for patients
Pain Management Service



PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



As part of your treatment it has been suggested that you may benefit from nerve root injections. It is difficult to say how much this treatment may help your pain. This written information will try to answer some of your questions. It is impossible for this kind of leaflet to cover all the information about nerve root injections 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 please ask us when you come in for treatment or contact the Pain Clinic between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday on **0114 271 2493**

Do I need to stay overnight in hospital to have a nerve root injection?

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.

Where is the nerve root injection done?

The nerve root injection is carried out in the X-ray department or in a small theatre in the Day Case Centre.

What is a nerve root injection?

A nerve root injection is an injection of any of these drugs:

- steroid
- local anaesthetic
- mixture of both

How will having a nerve root injection help me?

Sometimes the nerves in your spine become irritated and this can cause pain. Injecting these drugs bathes the affected root of the nerves and may help to reduce irritation or pain for a period of time. It can also help to work out where the pain is coming from.

How is a nerve root injection performed?

The treatment is carried out in the X-ray or Day Case centre. 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?

The treatment takes approximately 20 minutes. The area of skin to which the needle is applied is cleaned with a sterile solution. There may be some discomfort involved. However, the doctor will numb the affected area by injecting a local anaesthetic.

What happens after my treatment?

After you have had your nerve root injection you will have a small dressing on the treated area, which you can remove the following day. Before allowing you home, we will check your pulse and blood pressure. When we feel that you have recovered from the treatment, you will be able to have something to eat and drink and then you will be able to go home.

What are the risks in having a nerve root injection?

Any treatments that involve injections near your spine may cause problems. The doctor will explain these to you before asking you to sign a consent form giving permission to carry out the treatment. Only sign the consent form if you are 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.

Are there any side effects?

There may be some immediate side effects from this treatment, either from the local anaesthetic or from the injection. These may include:

- numb legs
- difficulty passing urine
- low blood pressure

These problems tend not to last long but we may sometimes decide it is better to admit you until the side effects have worn off. This would mean staying in hospital overnight. We would especially do this if the numbness affects your walking or you are unable to pass urine.

If your blood pressure were lowered then we would treat this by giving you extra fluids by a drip.

What should I look out for when I go home?

Infection

Anyone having an injection is at risk of infection. However, this is very rare. Some of the signs you should look out for include:

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

Increase in pain

- It is not unusual for your pain to increase after your treatment
- 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.

What happens when I go home?

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. If you have had sedation you may also feel drowsy.

For the first 24 hours after your treatment we recommend that you:

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

Please contact the Pain Clinic during office hours or your GP with **any concerns**.

What if I would like any further 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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