

Lignocaine (Lidocaine) Infusions

Information and advice for patients

Pain management

Why am I having Lignocaine infusions?

You are having this form of pain management because:

- you have pain all over your body that is not being helped by tablets.
- the pain is so widespread that injections are not a realistic option.

What is a Lignocaine infusion?

Lignocaine infusions are a form of treatment given via an intravenous infusion (you may know this as a 'drip') through a small plastic tube (cannula) into a vein in your hand or arm, which aims to improve your symptoms, allowing you to increase your activity and improve your quality of life.

It is a form of symptom management and is not a cure for your pain.

How does it work and what are the benefits to the treatment?

Nobody is one hundred percent sure why Lignocaine helps reduce pain levels, but it is thought to alter the balance of chemical in cells in your body so that pain signal transmission along the nerves is altered, resulting in you having reduced pain levels.

Experience and studies have shown that people who have pain similar to yours have responded well to this form of management, whilst other patients report no benefit at all.

Are there any alternative treatments?

Alternative treatments may include other medications or attending a Pain Management Programme.

Are there any risks or side-effects from this treatment¹?

Common side-effects:

- Hypotension - low blood pressure 16% (This normally requires no intervention and can be managed simply by slowing down the rate of infusion or stopping.)
- Headache
- Problems with the cannula or electrocardiogram (ECG) electrodes
- Hypertension - high blood pressure
- Tachycardia - fast heart rate
- Nausea

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Rare risks:

- Cardiac arrhythmias - an irregular heartbeat
- Cardiac arrest - the heart stops and full resuscitation is needed (Due to Lignocaine toxicity)

Please inform staff if you feel unwell and especially if you have any sensation of tingling or numbness around your mouth.

You will be monitored throughout the procedure to observe your body's response to the Lignocaine and help staff identify if you are having any side-effects to it.

If they are going to happen, the above problems most commonly occur during the procedure.

What to expect

Before the procedure

You may eat and drink and should take all your regular medications as usual.

Please bring a list of your medications with you on the day of the procedure.

You will be admitted to the procedures unit and weighed in order to calculate the correct dose of Lignocaine to infuse.

The doctor will explain the procedure and ask you to sign a consent form. Please make sure that you have understood the explanation and ask any relevant questions.

During the procedure

A cannula will be inserted into your hand or arm to which the infusion will be connected. You will also be connected to a blood pressure monitor and heart monitor.

The procedure will take between one and three hours.

We ask you to remain on a bed or a reclining chair during the procedure. However, should you need the toilet, ask a member of staff who will assist you.

Please bring something to pass the time whilst having your infusions. If you wish to use MP3 players or radios please use headphones as you will be in an open ward.

After the procedure

You must not drive yourself or travel on public transport for the rest of the day.

We would prefer you to be accompanied, by a friend or relative, on the journey home and ideally someone to stay with you overnight.

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What do I need to do on discharge?

You should take it easy for the rest of the day. Over the next few weeks you need to try and gradually increase your level of activity. If you do not participate in some form of exercise to improve your general fitness and wellbeing, you may not feel any major benefit from this treatment.

Follow up

After the procedure we will discharge you back to the care of your GP. They will review your progress and request re-referral back to the Pain Clinic if they deem this to be necessary.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Pain Management Service on:

Tel: 0121 507 4344/ 5602

Monday to Friday 9am-4pm

If you have any problems outside these times, or are experiencing severe side effects, please contact your GP.

Female patients

If you are pregnant or trying to conceive please inform Pain Management Services prior to the infusion on the telephone numbers listed above

References

- Staud, R. (2009) 'Fibromyalgia syndrome', in Smith, H. *Current therapy in pain*. Philadelphia: Saunders Elsevier, pp. 233-241
- Raphael, J. H., Southall, J. L., & Kitas, G. D. (2003). Adverse effects of intravenous lignocaine therapy in fibromyalgia syndrome. *Rheumatology*, 42(1), 185-186.
- Eipe, N., Gupta, S., & Penning, J. J. B. E. (2016). Intravenous lidocaine for acute pain: an evidence-based clinical update. *Bja Education*, 16(9), 292-298.

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Further information

You may find the following websites useful:

Versus Arthritis

<https://www.versusarthritis.org/>

Fibromyalgia action UK

<https://www.fibromyalgia-associationuk.org/>

(Websites accessed 9 October 2023)

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