

Nerve root sleeve injection

Information and advice for patients

Pain Management

Your doctor at the Pain Management clinic has suggested that a root sleeve injection may help ease your pain. This leaflet will briefly explain the treatment. It is important that you understand the treatment you will be receiving.

What is a nerve root sleeve?

The pain you are experiencing 'travels' down your leg.

What is a nerve root sleeve injection?

A nerve root sleeve injection is an injection of local anaesthetic and steroid, into your back, which bathes the root of the nerve that relates to this pain.

How long the pain relief lasts, varies from person to person. It may last from a few days to several months.

What are the benefits?

The benefit of this injection is that you may not require spinal surgery afterwards atleast for the next 5 years.

What are the risks?

There is little evidence about the risks of the injections however possible risks include:

- Occasionally bruising may occur around the site of the injection
- The steroid part of the injection can take several weeks to take full effect so the pain may worsen. This is normal and should settle.
- Sometimes people can faint during, or after, the injection. We will monitor your blood pressure and ask you to rest after having the injection.
- There is between 1-2% risk of infection, and between 0.1% - 0.01% risk of severe infection. This risk is increased for people with diabetes.
- Allergic reaction to the injection, although this is very uncommon and occurs in less than 1 in 7000 procedures. It can be just a rash, or, even more rarely, a life threatening event. We will provide treatment for this if you have a reaction.
- If you have diabetes, we will monitor your blood sugar levels after the procedure as the steroid can increase them.
- In most cases, the injection will only give temporary pain relief and you will need other treatments alongside it.
- 1 in 7000 patients experience short term nerve injury which will fully recover.
- 1 in 250,000 patients experience long term nerve injury. Will they fully recover?

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Are there any alternative treatments?

Alternative methods for managing your pain include medication therapy, acupuncture, TENS, physiotherapy, or attending a Pain Management Programme.

It should be remembered that all injections offer temporary benefit only in the majority of cases and may be given in conjunction alongside other treatments.

Preparing for the procedure

Please let us know if you are taking anticoagulant medications (blood thinners) such as Clopidogrel (Plavix), Warfarin or dipyridamole. You may need to stop these before the procedure.

If you are taking Warfarin we will need to do a blood test before you have the procedure. Please be aware that this may cause a slight delay to your treatment.

You can continue to take all other medications as prescribed.

You may eat and drink as normal.

The procedure

You will be admitted to the Minor Ops unit in the Birmingham Treatment Centre. Please note that this is a mixed sex facility.

When you arrive, a nurse will check your blood pressure and give you a gown to put on. The doctor will then explain the procedure and ask you to sign a consent form. Please make sure that you understand the procedure and ask any questions.

During the procedure

The whole procedure takes around 15 minutes. X-rays will be taken throughout the procedure to ensure the correct area is injected.

This is what happens:

1. You will be asked to lie on your stomach on the bed.
2. The area of your back or neck will be cleaned, and local anaesthetic will be used to numb the area.
3. You will then receive the injection.

You may feel some discomfort when you are having the injection. A nurse will stay with you throughout the procedure.

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After the procedure

After the injection the nurse will check your blood pressure at regular intervals and you will be asked to rest for about one hour. After the hour you will be able to get up. Please check with the nurse looking after you, before getting up. Once you are mobile and have passed urine, you will be able to go home. You must not drive a vehicle yourself or travel on public transport for the rest of the day. We would prefer if you were accompanied, by a friend or relative, on your journey home.

Take it gently for a few days. The steroid injection may take a few days to start acting and relieving the pain. Initially the pain may feel worse but it should settle. It is important to keep taking your usual pain-killers until the injection starts to work.

Follow up

After the procedure we will discharge you back to the care of your GP. They should review your progress and request re-referral back to the Pain Clinic as necessary.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns please contact us on:

Tel: 0121 507 4344 / 5602 / 4866

Monday - Friday 9am–4pm

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

Further information

More information with regards your condition, treatment options and support groups, can be found at:

- www.painrelieffoundation.org.uk
- www.britishpainsociety.org.uk
- <https://painconcern.org.uk>

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website www.swbh.nhs.uk, follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs.

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Sources used for the information in this leaflet

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