**X-ray Guided Nerve Root Block Injection**  
*(CT/Fluoroscopy)*

**What is a nerve root block?**

A nerve root block is an injection of local anaesthetic and steroid around one of the nerves in your spine. It is carried out with the aid of an x-ray. The aim is to see if your leg pain can be relieved.

You will need to bring someone with you to hospital to stay with you and drive you home afterwards. It would be best if that person could stay with you for a while when you get home.

**Why do I need a nerve root block?**

Other tests usually an MRI scan will have shown a swollen disc pressing on a nerve. This is likely to be causing pain in your leg.

**Who has made the decision?**

The consultant team and/or specialist physiotherapist in charge of your case will have referred you on to the radiologist carrying out your nerve root block. If after discussion with the radiologist you decide you do not want the test you can decide against it.

**What are the alternatives?**

The alternatives will include: doing nothing, physiotherapy and pain relief. Occasionally surgery to repair a disc is appropriate this will be discussed with you.

**Who will be performing the nerve root block?**

The test is carried out by a radiologist (a doctor who specialises in x-ray procedures). The radiologist will explain the test to you before he starts, and answer any questions you may have.

The x-ray equipment is operated by a radiographer. Radiology nurses will also be present during the procedure. These members of staff will introduce themselves at the start of the examination.

Occasionally student radiographers or medical students will be present to observe the procedure.

**Where will it take place?**

In the fluoroscopy room or the CT scanner in the Medical Imaging Department.

**How do I prepare for a nerve root block?**

- You will need someone to drive you home and to look after you for 24 hours.
- Nerve root blocks can be performed as an outpatient / day case.
- You will have had some blood tests performed before the procedure to check that you do not have an increased risk of bleeding.
- You should be prepared to stay overnight if necessary.
If you have any allergies or you have previously reacted to intravenous contrast medium, you must let the doctor know. Intravenous contrast medium is the injection we give you during some scans.

If you are diabetic, please contact the Medical Imaging Department on 01392 402336 selecting option 2, in-patient enquiries and then option 8 for the radiology nurses.

If you normally take any medication to thin your blood (anticoagulation or antiplatelet drugs) such as: warfarin / clopidogrel / aspirin / non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS / brufen / ibufen / nurofen) / dabigatran (Pradaxa) / rivaroxiban (Xarelto) / Apixaban (Eliquis) / phendione / acenocoumarol – then these may need to be stopped or altered. Please seek the advice of your hospital consultant or nurse specialist as soon as possible, ask your GP, or contact the Medical Imaging Department on 01392 402336 selecting option 2, in-patient enquiries and then option 8 for the radiology nurses.

After discussion with your GP or referring clinician, and you can safely stop these medications it is recommended that:
- Warfarin is stopped 6 days prior to your procedure
- Aspirin is stopped 7 days prior to your procedure
- Clopidogrel is stopped 7 days prior to your procedure
- NSAIDS are stopped 2 days prior to your procedure
- Rivaroxaban (Xarelto) and Apixaban (Eliquis) are stopped 2 days before your procedure.
If you are taking Dabigatran (Pradaxa) please consult your doctor or contact the Medical Imaging Department on 01392 402336 selecting option 2, in-patient enquiries and then option 8 for the radiology nurses.

Other medication should be taken as normal.

Can I bring a friend or relative?
Yes, but for reasons of safety they will not be able to accompany you into the x-ray room.

Valuables
Patients are encouraged to leave their valuables at home. It is the patient’s responsibility to ensure all valuables are on their person before leaving the Medical Imaging Department.

Cancelling your appointment
If you are unable to attend your appointment, we would be grateful if you could contact us on 01392 402336 selecting option one, as soon as possible. We can then offer your original appointment to another patient. A further date and time will then be arranged for you.
Please be advised that if you fail to attend your appointment, it may be necessary to remove you from the radiology waiting list.

Please note: If you have had D&V (diarrhoea and vomiting) you will need to contact us to rebook your appointment unless you have been clear for the past 48 hours.

What actually happens during a nerve root block?
The x-ray equipment to be used will either be an x-ray fluoroscopic machine or a CT scanner.
The radiologist will explain the injection to you before he/she starts and will answer any questions you may have.
You may need to change into a hospital gown first of all. We will ask you lie face down on the x-ray table.
The table is then moved under the x-ray machine which is connected to a TV monitor. The radiologist will apply some antiseptic to your back, which will feel rather cold. He/she will then inject the local anaesthetic into your back and numb the area. This will feel sharp and will sting for a few seconds.
At this point an x-ray is taken and the radiologist can see your spine on the TV monitor. A very fine needle is put close to the nerve root and local anaesthetic is injected to see if this will relieve your pain. This may cause some discomfort for a few moments.
Will it hurt?
The injection of local anaesthetic may cause some pain, the area will then go numb.

How long will it take?
The test itself takes up to one hour. We will ask you to rest in the waiting room for a further 30 minutes afterwards.

What happens afterwards?
We will help you get up slowly from the x-ray table as your back or leg may feel a bit stiff. Sometimes patients feel a little faint or dizzy when they sit up.

What will happen to the results?
A report of the procedure will be recorded in your records immediately and also sent to your specialist within 48 hours.

We aim to report examinations, as soon as possible. Results will be sent to the Doctor who referred you for the investigation, as they may need further review and therefore it could be approximately 20 days before you are contacted by your Doctor.

You may be asked to complete a follow-up form at home by recording your pain level for two days. When we receive this information back from you we will write a report and send it to your consultant.

Are there any risks or complications?
Any adverse reaction to this injection is rare.

There is a small possibility of an allergic reaction to the drugs used. If this occurs it is immediate, but is very rare. Every precaution is taken to avoid infection. There is a small risk of bleeding also.

Finally...
Some of your questions should have been answered by this leaflet, but remember that this is only a starting point for discussion about your treatment with the doctors looking after you. Make sure you are satisfied that you have received enough information about the procedure, before you sign the consent form.

If you find reading this leaflet difficult or you don’t understand what it means for you, please call 402336, selecting option 1, then option 4 and we can talk it through.

Contact us
If you have any queries or concerns you can contact us on 01392 402336.

How to get to the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital at Wonford

Park & Ride
Our Dartline PR3 Park & Ride bus is quick and not expensive.

It runs from Wonford Hospital to Digby. Digby is near Tesco, the railway station and junction 30 of the M5. There are signs along some of the main roads into Exeter pointing to the RD&E park and ride.

The park and ride service runs from Monday - Friday. There is no service at the weekend.

By bus
Stagecoach buses H Service run to Wonford Hospital from the high street in the city centre Monday to Saturday. Limited Sunday service. They also run to Wonford Hospital from the Broadfields area.

Stagecoach buses from Exmouth (57), Dawlish (2), Torbay (X46), Teignmouth (2) and Plymouth (X38) stop next to the hospital on Barrack Road.

First Southern National bus X53 from Weymouth, Seaton, Beer and Sidford stops next to the hospital on Barrack Road. Turner’s Tours bus 369
from Chulmleigh, Lapford, Morchard Bishop and Crediton stops next to the hospital on Barrack Road and outside the main front entrance of the hospital.

By car

Car parking is by pay & display, so please bring change.

The number of spaces is limited, so please leave plenty of time to find a space.

Using Sat Nav to find us?

Tap in postcode: EX2 5DW for RD&E Wonford.

For more information on how to get to the hospital, please use the following website:
www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/patients/where

For more information on the Medical Imaging Department, please visit our website:
www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/patients/services/medical-imaging

This leaflet was modified with acknowledgment of, and permission from, the Royal College of Radiologists