

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.
- If you have problems with blood clotting or are taking anticoagulants you will have some blood tests before the procedure.
- 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 / ibrufen / 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 5 for Fluoroscopy**

- Other medication should be taken as normal.

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.

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.

Contact us

If you found reading your leaflet difficult, you do not understand what it means for you, if you have any queries or concerns you can contact us on: 01392 402336 and we can talk it through.

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

Please refer to the enclosed "Welcome to the Medical Imaging Department" leaflet or use the Trusts website for the latest information:

www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/our-sites

For more information on the Medical Imaging Department, please visit our website:

www.rdehospital.nhs.uk/services/medical-imaging-radiology-x-ray/

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

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