

Having a nerve root block

Information for patients



What is a nerve root block?

This is an injection of steroid and local anaesthetic into the area around the nerves in your lower back. This is not a cure but an attempt to relieve your pain. The procedure is undertaken with you lying on your front, on the x-ray table. We will help to make you as comfortable as possible. Your back will be cleaned and a local anaesthetic may be used to numb the area. X-rays are used to guide the needle to the correct position which is then confirmed with contrast (x-ray dye), before the steroid is given. You may experience some leg pain during the procedure.

Who performs the test?

The test is performed by a team of healthcare professionals which may include a radiographer, an advanced radiographer practitioner / specialist radiographer, an assistant and a radiologist.

How do I prepare for the test?

If you are on Warfarin or any blood thinning medication, please contact us promptly on: **0113 392 3768**. You do not need to prepare in advance for this test. You may continue to eat and drink. Do not stop taking vital medicines (for example heart drugs, steroids, diuretics / water tablets) unless advised.

What should I bring with me?

You will be required to change into a gown for this examination. We will provide you with a gown, but you may wish to bring your own dressing gown. Please do not bring large sums of money or items of value with you.

Unfortunately we are unable to provide any childcare so please make alternative arrangements if necessary.

How long will I be in the department?

You may be in the department for 1-2 hours. The examination usually takes 30 minutes per injection. Although we strive to keep to your appointment time, occasionally there may be a delay due to emergency patients.

Are there any side-effects?

Radiation

This procedure involves x-rays. Female patients who are, or might be pregnant **must** inform a member of staff in advance.

The amount of radiation used is more than an ordinary x-ray of the chest or body and is equal to the natural radiation we receive from the atmosphere over a period of approximately two years. The risk from this radiation dose is very low.

Allergic reaction

Some patients may be allergic to the x-ray dye or medicines we give you. This is very rare. If you have any allergies please tell the member of staff who is performing your examination, at the start of the examination.

Do you ever fail to complete the examination?

This is a safe examination that is usually successful. If, for any reason, we are unable to perform the examination we will inform your doctor who will discuss the alternatives with you.

Despite these small risks your doctor believes it is beneficial for you to have this examination. Do bear in mind that there are greater risks from missing a serious disorder by not having the examination.

How will I feel following the test?

Your legs may feel numb after the procedure due to the local anaesthetic injection.

We strongly advise that you do not drive for at least 12 hours following this examination.

Your symptoms may feel worse after the procedure, you may take pain relief medication when necessary. It may take up to a week for there to be any improvement in your symptoms, as it takes a while for the steroid injection to start to work.

How will I get my results?

You will not be given your results on the day. The results will also be sent to your GP (if they referred you for the test. If so you must make an appointment to see them). If you have been sent by a hospital consultant / specialist then you will be sent an appointment to attend the relevant clinic or contacted by letter with the results.



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