

Spinal – Nerve Root Injection

Introduction

A nerve root injection is normally undertaken in order to determine the cause of pain in the leg or foot. It is a test rather than a treatment for your pain. After a small injection to give local anaesthetic, a special dye that is visible on X-ray is injected next to the nerve root via a fine needle. This is followed by another injection of local anaesthetic and a steroid.

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

Guidance for Patients

Where is the procedure done and who will do it?

The procedure is done at the Radiology Department in a special screening room. This allows your Consultant Radiologist, who is a doctor that specialises in X-ray guided procedures, to see exactly where the needle is going.

Women who are still having periods should have the procedure during the 10 days following the start of your menstrual period. (This includes the time that you are menstruating). If your appointment is not within the first 10 days of your menstrual cycle, please telephone the department and we will arrange a suitable date with you.

Should I continue taking my medication and can I eat and drink before?

If you are taking medications then you should still take them, including any pain medication or medication for diabetes. However, the procedure is not safe for people taking any medications to thin their blood, such as warfarin or clopidogrel. You may eat and drink as usual before the procedure, unless you are having a cervical (neck) nerve root injection, in which case you must not eat and drink for 4 hours before the procedure.

When do I need to come into hospital?

Mostly the procedure is done as an outpatient and you will receive an appointment letter informing you of the time of your appointment. It is useful if you can arrive 10 -15 minutes early in order to get ready for the procedure. The procedure takes approximately 40 minutes. If you need to be admitted you will get a letter telling you when to arrive and which ward to go to.

What will happen when I arrive in the X-ray department?

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

When you arrive at the department, one of our nursing staff will collect you and take you into the screening room. The Consultant Radiologist will check all of your details and explain the procedure to you. He or she will then ask you to sign a consent form. Once this is done, the nurse will help you to get into the correct position on the X-ray table and will stay with you throughout the procedure so that he or she can help you and explain things as they happen.

What happens during the procedure?

After injecting local anaesthetic into your skin and muscles the Consultant Radiologist will place a fine needle into the space next to the nerve root using an X-ray machine to guide him or her. The Radiologist will then inject a special dye, known as 'contrast', next to the root and inject a small amount of local anaesthetic and steroid. When the Radiologist makes the injection he or she will ask if you feel any pain. If you do feel pain, he or she will ask if the pain is in the same or a different place to where you usually have discomfort. We will then apply a small dressing or plaster to the wound.

What happens after the procedure?

Once the procedure is finished and we are happy that you are well, you will be able to go home. Occasionally we may need to observe you for a few hours after the procedure. If you do need to be admitted you will be discharged usually 4 hours after the procedure. When you get home, you should rest for about 24 hours but you can eat and drink as normal. It is quite common to have some pain or discomfort in the back for a few days after the procedure.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening –severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains –please dial 999.

GP surgeries are still open

GP practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments. GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic and GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it. When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

Contact Us

01902 307 999