

Chronic Pain Clinic

Lumbar Sympathetic Block

What is a lumbar sympathetic block?

A lumbar sympathetic block (injection) is one method used to provide pain relief by blocking the pain-inducing sympathetic nerves in the lumbar (lower) region of the back. Sympathetic nerves are responsible for controlling the automatic functions of our body skin temperature. The sympathetic nervous system can also be responsible for increasing pain long after an injury has healed.

Before the procedure

- Treatment takes place as an outpatient at the Ely day Surgery Unit or Addenbrookes Pain Clinic.
- Your stay may be between two to four hours and before any treatment begins you will be asked to provide assurance that someone is able to drive you home if you are undergoing injections.
- You will have a morning or an afternoon appointment.
- On arrival, you will be asked to complete questionnaires as part of an audit and to record improvements in pain levels.
- You will be asked to change into a theatre gown and your blood pressure and pulse will be recorded.
- Your doctor will then discuss the procedure with you and ask you to sign a consent form.

The procedure

- In the treatment room, you may have a small needle (Cannula) placed in the back of your hand. This allows the doctor to give you sedation and/or intravenous fluids if necessary.
- Once you are lying in the correct position the doctor will clean your back with an antiseptic solution which can feel very cold.
- The procedure will be carried out under x-ray screening.
- Local anaesthetic is injected into your back, which may sting at first, but the area will soon go numb.
- Contrast (a solution which shows up under x-ray) is injected to make sure that the needle is in the correct position as seen on x-ray.
- Once this is confirmed local anaesthetic is injected and you may feel your leg begin to warm.

Following the injection

- After the procedure you will be taken to the recovery area where the nursing staff will observe you.
- You may feel a little drowsy and wish to sleep.
- Your legs may feel warm; the nursing staff will monitor any changes in temperature.
- You will lie flat for about 45 minutes and then be assisted to sit up and offered light refreshment.
- Your blood pressure and pulse will be checked again before you get dressed.
- Before you leave, the doctor will see you again and ask a few questions about your pain and any effects that the injection may have had.

Please ensure that you have arranged for someone to drive you home after this procedure. Failure to do so will result in your procedure being cancelled.

If you have had sedation, we recommend that you arrange for someone to stay with you overnight and that you do not drive for 24 hours.

Possible side effects

- Not all the nerves leaving the vertebral column (backbone) carry pain messages.
- Some carry instructions to muscles in your legs. If these nerves are numbed by the injection then your legs can become heavy or weak. This side effect will only last a short time.

What to expect afterwards

- Some immediate relief of your pain may be noticed due to the local anaesthetic but some tenderness may be felt at the injection site.
- Take your regular pain killers as normal.
- Try to keep on the move about the house but do not do anything too strenuous.
- As your pain decreases you should try to gently increase your exercise. Simple activities like a daily walk, using an exercise bike or swimming on your back will help to improve your muscle tone and strengthen your back. The best way is to increase your activity slowly.
- Try not to overdo things on a good day so that you end up paying for it with more pain the following day.

Follow up

A letter will be sent to your GP and a further appointment to see your pain consultant will be posted to you.

Points to remember

- Please bring your glasses if you need them for reading
- Always bring a list of all current medication.

- Continue taking all your usual medication on treatment day unless advised to omit anything by the Pain Clinic.
- If there is any possibility you may be pregnant please inform the doctor or nurse.

Additional information

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. If you require more information or have any questions please speak to your doctor or contact the Pain Clinic. (The number below is generally manned 0800 – 1700 Monday to Friday; there is an answer machine out of hours, please leave a message and we will return your call).

Telephone number: 01223 216993

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Potete chiedere di ottenere queste informazioni in altre lingue, in stampato grande o in audiocassetta.

Italian

若你需要本信息的繁體中文、大字體或音訊格式的版本，請要求索取。

Cantonese

તમને આ માહિતી બીજી ભાષાઓમાં, મોટા અક્ષરોમાં અથવા સાંભળી શકાય એવા માધ્યમ (ઓડીઓ ફોર્મેટ)માં જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો.

Gujarati

تکایہ پرسیار بکہ نہ گہر نہ وزانیاریہت دہوی بہ زمانیکی تر ، بہ پیتی گہورہ یانیش بہ شیوہی دہنگ

Kurdish

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات دوسری زبانوں میں، بڑے الفاظ کی اشاعت میں یا آڈیو ٹیپ پر درکار ہوں تو براۓ مہربانی اس کیلئے درخواست کریں۔

Urdu



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. Please do not smoke anywhere on the site.
For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free, 0800 169 0 169

Document history

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