

Chronic Pain Clinic

Stellate Ganglion Block

What is a stellate ganglion injection?

A stellate ganglion injection is one method of providing pain relief for certain conditions affecting the arm, head and neck.

The term 'stellate ganglion' refers to one point on a chain of sympathetic nerves in the neck. The sympathetic nerves are responsible for controlling the automatic functions of our body, including our heart rate, blood pressure and skin temperature. They prepare the body for emergencies – the so called 'fight or flight' response. It seems that the sympathetic nerves also act to increase and maintain pain long after an injury has healed. The nerves that go to the head, chest and arms join to form what is known as a ganglion in the neck. This is like a junction box of nerves. By 'blocking' or stopping the action of the sympathetic nerves in this area, by injecting them with local anaesthetic, pain may be relieved.

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 then be asked to change into a theatre gown and your blood pressure and pulse will be recorded.
- A doctor will then discuss the procedure with you and ask you to sign a consent form.

The procedure

- In the treatment room, you will 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 neck with an antiseptic solution which can feel very cold.
- A needle is then inserted to lie just above the stellate ganglion in your neck.

- You may experience discomfort.
- Once the needle is in the correct position the local anaesthetic will be injected. You may feel some slight discomfort but this should not be painful.

Following the injection

- After the procedure you will be taken to the recovery area where the nursing staff will observe you.
- After about thirty minutes a drink will be offered to you.
- 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 effects of the procedure

- Often patients experience flushing (redness) together with a slight drooping of the upper eyelid on the side of the injection. These effects are normal and only temporary. They indicate that the block is working well.
- A small nerve supplying the vocal cords may be numbed by the local anaesthetic. If this occurs you may experience some temporary hoarseness in your voice and an odd feeling on swallowing. This is temporary and will fully recover.

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

तमने आ माळिती भीछ भाषाओमां, मोटा अक्षरोमां अथवा सांभणी शकाय जेवा माध्यम
(ओडीओ इमेज)मां जेठती छोय तो कृपा करीने पूछो.

Gujarati

تکایه پرسیار بکه نه گهر نهوزانیاریهت دهوی به زمانیکی تر , به پیتی گهوره یانیش به شیوهی دهنگ

Kurdish

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات دوسری زبانوں میں، بڑے الفاظ کی اشاعت میں یا آڈیو ٹیپ پروکاروں کو براہ کرم 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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