

# Nerve Root Blocks

## Intended Benefits

A nerve root block involves placing an injection near to where a nerve exits from the spinal cord.

The aim is to reduce pain that is thought to arise from some form of irritation of the nerve at this area.

## Risks of this treatment

There is a small risk that the nerve itself may be damaged in which case there may be an increase in pain rather than a reduction.

As with any injection, there is a very slight chance of getting an infection where the needle is placed. Every effort is made to avoid this with use of skin-cleaning solution, sterile gloves and equipment.

The procedure is made as safe as possible by being performed by an experienced pain doctor who constantly monitors you throughout the procedure. X-rays are also used to help guide the needle into the correct position.

You may discuss the risks further with your pain doctor

## Pre-operative assessment & care

If you become pregnant, have any major illnesses/hospital admissions or start taking anti-coagulant drugs (for example warfarin or clopidogrel) discuss this with the pain doctor before the procedure.

If you have diabetes, you may need to make some changes to your diabetes medicine or diet on the day of the procedure. You should discuss this with your pain doctor before your procedure.

## On the day of the procedure:

- Follow the instructions given to you by the Day Surgical Unit staff about when last to eat or drink.
- Take all your usual medication including your painkillers
- Bring all your usual medication, or a list of what you are taking with you.
- Make sure that someone will collect you, take you home, and is available to stay with you overnight.

## During the procedure

At the Day Surgical Unit your pain doctor will see you and explain the procedure fully. Before the procedure starts a small cannula (tube) will be placed in a vein in the back of your hand through which we can give you medicines and fluids if that becomes necessary. You will be given medication (sedation) to make you feel sleepy during the injection. An oxygen mask will be placed over your face.

Using X-ray guidance a needle is placed next to the appropriate nerve root.

The procedure takes about 20 minutes.

After the procedure your blood pressure, pulse and respiration rate may be checked.

## After the procedure – what to expect

For some people, the nerve root block may not reduce their pain at all. It may make the pain worse.

You may feel weak or tired for a little while after the injection so we advise that you rest for 24 hours. During this time you should not: drive a car or operate equipment, sign any legal documents or drink alcohol.



You should continue taking your usual medication and the next day you may take a bath, or shower, and remove any plasters.

Please contact your GP (family doctor) if you have any other symptoms causing you concern and if:

- There is unusual redness or swelling at the injection site
- Your temperature is 38° C (100.4 F) or greater

**After discharge home**

To get the best out of your nerve root block you should:

- Continue with your usual medication including your painkillers
- Generally keep active, but within your pain limits
- Re-introduce previously painful activities gradually over the next few weeks
- Maintain any exercise routine you may have been given by your physiotherapist

You will either be given a follow-up appointment to attend the Pain Clinic after your procedure, or be followed up by telephone.

Whenever you come to the Pain Clinic, please bring all your usual medication or a list of what you are taking with you.

Please visit our website, [www.thepainteam.com](http://www.thepainteam.com) for more information and to contact us