



General Information on Pain Injections & Blocks

WHY HAVE A PAIN INJECTION/BLOCK?

Pain injections can be done for two main reasons:

1. To diagnose (understand) your pain: called *diagnostic blocks*. Your pain specialist is trying to understand where your pain is coming from. He/she will block certain structures or nerves with an anaesthetic. Pain reduction will only last a few days. You will fill out a 'Block Assessment Sheet'. If your pain is reduced by more than 50-60% then you may go on to have a therapeutic block/procedure e.g. radiofrequency neurotomy. If the block doesn't work, then you may have a different block to seek different sources of your pain.
2. To treat your pain: called *therapeutic blocks*. These treatments are different to the diagnostic blocks and are generally aimed at reducing your pain for anything from 3 months to 2 years. An example is radiofrequency neurotomy. These procedures can be repeated if your pain returns.

These pain procedures may be used as part of a whole package of care that includes; increasing your activity levels & helping you cope. Please do not ignore the other parts of your therapy, even if your procedure has been 100% successful in reducing your pain. Our aim is for your continued and permanent well-being.

BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

The procedure will be explained and discussed in detail including the benefits and risks. You will be asked to sign a consent form.

It is vital for us to be aware of any medications you take, any medical problems/conditions you have and any allergies.

Tell us if you take any blood-thinning medication like warfarin, Plavix (clopidogrel). Aspirin is generally OK to take before your procedure but it's best to check with us.

You must not eat or drink anything from the midnight before your procedure. This includes chewing gum.

On the morning of the procedure, take all your regular pain medications (with a sip of water). Don't change the doses or stop them before or after the procedure.

THE PROCEDURE

Procedures are generally performed under 'light sedation', provided by an anaesthetist. They work closely with your pain specialists.

It is sometimes important to communicate with you

throughout the procedure. *This is for your own safety.*

The skin is numbed (anaesthetised) with local anaesthetic, which might sting a bit. Your pain specialist will do everything possible to keep any discomfort to a minimum.

We use X-rays for most procedures. **If you are pregnant or could be pregnant, let us know.**

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PROCEDURE

You will be monitored in the recovery area & ward until it is safe for you to go home.

You may feel a bit drowsy if you had sedation.

Do not drive or operate dangerous machinery, look after children or drink any alcohol for 24 hours. This is for your own safety and those around you. Someone should take you home and take care of you overnight.

Our pain nurse will phone you a few days/weeks after the procedure.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

All injections carry minor risks like discomfort, bleeding, bruising & skin infection.

Procedures can carry major risks that may include worsening of your pain, numbness, serious bleeding or infections.

There can be some very serious but rare side effects like temporary or permanent nerve damage, paralysis, toxic reactions or even life threatening allergic reactions.

If you have any questions or concerns please discuss with your pain specialist & nurse before proceeding.

All procedures carry the risk of not helping to reduce your pain or can sometimes even worsen it.

REMEMBER

After some procedures your pain may worsen for a short time.

Don't change any of your medications before or after the procedure, otherwise it is difficult to assess if the procedure worked.

If you experience these symptoms after a pain procedure, seek medical attention immediately (GP or ED):

- Feeling unwell in any way, like fevers or a high temperature.
- New or worsening back pain.
- Any numbness or pins and needles that you did not have before the procedure.
- Weakness in the legs or arms.
- Difficulty in passing urine.
- Any incontinence of urine or your bowels.