

Neurosurgery – Therapeutic Lumbar Epidural Injection

Introduction

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 are able to support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

Anaesthetic and steroid injections are a common treatment for a number of conditions, where the medication will be delivered close to the suspected cause, this can help to identify the source and also treat pain by reducing inflammation.

Please read the following information in conjunction with the staying healthy guidance appropriate for your condition.

Guidance for Patients

Preparing for the procedure

Please let us know if you are taking anticoagulant medications (blood thinners) such as Clopidogrel (Plavix), Warfarin or dipyridamole. You may need to stop these before the procedure.

If you are taking Warfarin we will need to do a blood test before you have the procedure. Please be aware that this may cause a slight delay to your treatment. You can continue to take all other medications as prescribed. You may eat and drink as normal.

You will need to arrange transport to attend for your injection as you must not drive yourself or travel on public transport after the injection has been performed.

We would like you to know about the procedure as much as possible so you can make an informed decision about going ahead with the injection. Can we therefore ask you to read the British Association of Spine Surgeons leaflet on the procedure which can be found at:

<https://spinesurgeons.ac.uk/resources/Documents/Booklets/FINAL-04371-18-Lumbar-Radiculopathy-Nerve-Root-Block-Injection.pdf>

On the Day

You will be admitted to the Day surgery Unit at Rugby St Cross hospital. Please note that this is a mixed sex facility. When you arrive, a nurse will ask you some questions and check your blood pressure and give you a gown to put on. The clinician performing the injection will explain the procedure and ask you to sign a consent form. Please make sure that you understand the procedure and ask any questions. **It is important that you highlight any allergies you may have to the Nurse and clinician.**

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The procedure

Caudal Epidural Injection – this is a single injection at the bottom of the spine. We may suggest this for back pain if pain is arising from multiple different areas. Think of it as a ‘treat all’ type approach.

You will be taken to theatre and asked to lie on your front. A cold cleaning liquid is put on the skin in order to create a sterile area. Some local anaesthetic is then injected into the surface of the skin in order to then pass the spinal needle more comfortably. A series of x-rays are taken as the needle is manoeuvred into place. You will feel some movement of the needle but it should not be particularly uncomfortable. A small amount of dye is then injected to confirm the needle placement. This is then followed by the injection of steroid and local anaesthetic around the nerve. If you experience any leg pain during the procedure please inform the clinician as this is an indication that the needle is near the nerve.

After the procedure

After the injection the nurse will check your blood pressure at regular intervals and you will be asked to rest for about one hour. After the hour you will be able to get up. Please check with the nurse looking after you, before getting up as the local anaesthetic can make your leg feel numb and weak after the injection and therefore be at risk of falling down. Once you are mobile and have passed urine, you will be able to go home. **You must not drive a vehicle yourself or travel on public transport for the rest of the day.** We would prefer if you were accompanied, by a friend or relative, on your journey home. Take it easy for the rest of the day after the injection and look to be getting back to your work/normal routines the next day. The steroid injection may take up to two weeks to start acting and relieving the pain. Initially the pain may feel worse but it should settle. It is important to keep taking your usual pain-killers until the injection starts to work and then slowly come off them.

Follow up

After the procedure we will not arrange a formal follow up clinic appointment as hopefully you will be more comfortable and no further intervention is required. However, please be re-assured that you have not been discharged from the spinal service. We would like you to complete the attached pain diary given to you in hospital for six weeks. If you feel that you have benefitted sufficiently from the injection and are happy to continue independently then no further action is necessary. Most trapped nerves in the spine settle down without the need for surgery and hopefully this will be the case with you. If your pain does settle please try and remain as active as you most sensibly can to reduce the chance of recurrent episodes of pain. However, if after six weeks you continue to struggle with the pain despite the injection or have any concerns please contact our secretary on - 02476 XXXXXX to arrange a further clinic appointment.

Further information

More information with regards your condition, treatment options and support groups, can be found at:

www.painrelieffoundation.org.uk

<https://www.britishpainsociety.org/people-with-pain/>

www.painconcern.org.uk

Or for more information about our hospitals and services please see our website www.uhcw.nhs.uk

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What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If your pain is deteriorating we recommend you request a G.P. review. Features requiring more prompt review in A&E would be worsening power or sensation in the legs. If you become aware of deteriorating bowel or bladder function then we would recommend going straight to A&E for urgent assessment. Please avoid eating or drinking anything until you have been assessed and informed that you can eat and drink by A&E staff. If you are unsure as to what to do, please contact us.

Contact Us

If you have any questions or concerns please contact us on: Tel: 02476964000 Monday – Friday (office hours) and ask for neurosurgical secretaries. If you have any problems or significant concerns outside these times, or are experiencing severe side effects, please contact your GP or attend your local emergency department.

If you would like to contact us by post the address is:-

Neurosurgical Secretaries

5th Floor

UHCW

Clifford Bridge Road

Coventry

CV2 2DX