

Patient Information

Paravertebral blocks Thoracic/Lumbar

Introduction

This leaflet provides information about paravertebral blocks, the possible benefits and side effects and what you should do afterwards.

What is a paravertebral block?

This is an injection on to the nerves that run beside the spinal column.

Why am I having injections?

These nerves can become irritated or inflamed, which can cause pain. A paravertebral block has proven to be very effective for pain relief for some patients in this situation.

What is injected?

A small amount of local anaesthetic with or without steroid is injected. The steroid acts only around the area near to the injection site. It does not have the same widespread effects as taking long-term steroids such as weight gain, bone thinning or hormonal changes

Where is it done?

The procedure is carried out in the Chedworth Suite at Cheltenham General Hospital. A letter with directions and instructions will be sent to you by the Pain Clinic secretaries.

What will happen?

- You may be asked to wear a hospital gown
- You will be asked to lie on your stomach or on your side
- The area to be injected is cleaned with antiseptic
- The ultrasound machine may be used to direct the needle to the correct point

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**Chronic & Acute
Pain Service**

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- The consultant will numb the area with local anaesthetic before putting in the injection

How long will I be in hospital?

The procedure will take 15 to 20 minutes but you may be in the hospital for about 1½ hours. You will be given a time to come in to hospital which is usually 20 minutes before your procedure. This is to allow the nursing staff to admit you to the ward and check your medication list, allergies and any other problems you may have.

After the procedure, you will be offered a drink and a biscuit. You will be allowed to go home shortly afterwards.

Can I eat and drink?

You may eat and drink normally on the day of the procedure, unless your consultant has told you otherwise.

Can I take my usual medication?

If you are taking blood-thinners such as Warfarin, Clopidogrel or Rivaroxaban or you are diabetic, please contact the Pain Clinic Nurses for specific advice on Tel: 0300 422 2976. Otherwise take your usual tablets in the morning and bring them with you.

Can I drive home?

For safety reasons you are asked not to drive on the day of the procedure. Also you should have someone with you for the rest of the day.

What can go wrong?

Unfortunately no injection is without risk.

- You may have mild discomfort or soreness at the site of the injection. This should last no longer than 48 hours but in about one third of patients this can last up to week
- There may be a local allergic reaction to the injection and can result in redness and itching. This is not serious although we need to know for future treatments.

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A more severe allergic reaction would result in admission for hospital for urgent treatment

- The needle could access the blood stream or epidural space. Although the risk of this is reduced by using ultrasound guidance
- Some patients find that the paravertebral block does not help their pain at all. In which case an alternative pain management may be needed
- In a very small number of patients, there is a risk of damage to the tissues in the area of the injections and, very rarely, a permanent increase in pain
- On very rare occasions the needle may cause a small hole in the lung. This is called a pneumothorax. This can be a serious condition but is easily treated by the consultant. If this happens it would result in a longer stay in hospital

If you experience severe pain, sudden shortness of breath or feel generally unwell after the procedure, you should contact your GP or NHS 111 for advice.

Will the injection work?

Paravertebral blocks can be very effective but do not work for everyone.

The benefits may be long or short term. The important thing is to stay active and increase your general level of activity as far as possible.

For example:

- Take the stairs instead of the lift
- Increase the distance you walk a little each day

It is also a good idea to review the dosages of your pain medications with your GP and/or Pain Consultant and reduce these while your pain control is improved. This will reduce the risk of your body becoming so 'used to' or 'tolerant' of the medication that it no longer works very well.

What happens next?

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About 6 weeks after your procedure you will be asked to either email or telephone our Clinical Nurse Specialists to give a progress report. The telephone line will often have an answer machine attached while the nurses are busy with patients. Please leave your full name, hospital number and date of birth along with your progress report.

The next step in your treatment will be decided according to the amount of benefit you have had from the injections. Any further appointments will be sent to you in the post.

If you are free from pain, you may not be routinely followed up, but may be give a 6 month open appointment.

Contact information

Pain Clinic

Tel: 0300 422 2976

Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9:00am to 12:00pm

Tuesday, 1:30pm to 4.00pm

An answering machine will be in operation at all other times.

Email: ghn-tr.pain.feedback@nhs.net

Website: www.glospain.nhs.uk

If you need urgent advice, please contact your GP or NHS 111.

NHS 111

Tel: 111

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