

A guide to your nerve root block



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This booklet tells you about the procedure known as Image guided nerve root block.

It explains what is involved and what the possible risks are.

We hope you find this information helpful, but you should still discuss any concerns you may have with your doctor before you sign the consent form.

What is an image guided nerve root block and why do I need one?

An image nerve root block is a diagnostic test during which a special needle is passed through the skin to inject steroid and local anesthetic surrounding a specific nerve inside the body.

The doctor will use a CT scan or live x-rays (fluoroscopy) to guide the needle to the nerve.

The nerve root block can help identify if the targeted nerve is causing symptoms and in most cases this is the primary role for the nerve root block.

On occasion the nerve root block may help with improving symptoms over a longer term, however, they do not provide relief for all patients and in most cases any relief is only temporary.

Who has made this decision?

The consultant in charge of your care feels that this is the best way of getting more information about your problem.

We usually plan a nerve root block in advance so you have the opportunity to discuss your options with your consultant or her/his team.

Your opinion will be taken into account. If you do not want this procedure, you can decide not to have it at any time, even after signing the consent for.

What are the risks and complications?

An image guided nerve root block is a safe procedure and serious complications are rare. Small risks vary depending on where we are injecting.

Despite these small risks your consultant has decided to refer you for this examination. This is because they feel that the benefits of having the procedure outweigh the risks of having it done. Your consultant or one of her/his team will discuss your options with you in advance.

The risks include the following:

- Discomfort or mild pain in the area where the needle was placed is possible. This can usually be controlled with painkillers
- Bleeding is usually minimal and of short duration but more serious bleeding can rarely occur. If the bleeding continues, then it is possible that you might need a blood transfusion. Very rarely, an operation or another procedure is required to stop the bleeding

- Infection of the skin or deeper tissue is rare
- Injury of surrounding structures. In all nerve root blocks there is a tiny risk of damaging the nerve. This could worsen the pain and result in numbness and weakness in the region of the body the nerve supplies
- If the injection is in the neck (cervical spine) there is an extremely small risk of more serious complications, which include stroke, damage to your spinal cord and Horner's syndrome (drooping of the eyelid and constriction of the pupil of the eye)

If you have any worries, please do not hesitate to discuss possible complications or risks with hospital staff before your nerve root block.

How do I prepare for the nerve root block?

Nerve root blocks are an outpatient procedure.

There are no special preparations however, we need to know if you take some forms of medication or if you have certain medical conditions which are described opposite.

Can I eat and drink?

You can eat and drink as normal before your procedure

Can I still take my normal medications?

If you are taking warfarin, aspirin, clopidogrel or other blood thinning medications, please inform your hospital consultant at least one week before your procedure. Your blood thinning medication will need stopping in advance.

You can continue to take any other routine medicines.

Please bring a list of your medications with you to your appointment.

What actually happens during a nerve root block?

You will be brought to the x-ray department to have your nerve root block. The radiologist (the doctor who will do your procedure) will speak to you beforehand and answer your questions. Please let them know if you are allergic to anything.

The skin over the site will be cleaned with an antiseptic and covered with a sterile drape.

The procedure will be performed under a local anesthetic injection. The local anesthetic will sting initially, before the skin goes numb.

The doctor will use a CT scan or xrays to guide the needle to the nerve. You will need to stay still. You may feel some minor discomfort or pressure as the needle goes in and when the drugs (steroid and long acting local anaesthetic) are injected.

The procedure takes approximately 15 to 30 minutes from start to finish.

Frequently you will experience numbness and weakness in the affected limb after the procedure. This is normal and may get worse over the next couple of hours as the anesthetic works. The numbness may last for anything up to 36 hours.

The performing doctor will notify you of any particular symptoms to look out for after your injection as these will depend on where the injection occurs.

After the nerve root block

You may be asked to wait 10-20 minutes to check you are well and there have been no untoward effects.

Some patients may experience pain following this procedure.

Please let the nurses or radiographers know if you have pain or if you need any painkillers.

You can eat and drink normally.

Going home

If the procedure is being carried out as a day case and there are no complications, you will be allowed home after 10-20 minutes.

You must not drive or use public transport. You must have an adult to take you home (by car or taxi) and stay with you overnight.

If you live a long distance from a hospital (more than 30 minutes by car) or there is no one to take you home or stay with you overnight, you will have to stay in hospital.

If you feel unwell or continue to have severe pain, you should seek immediate medical advice (contact your GP or your consultant; or go to your nearest Accident and Emergency department).

When will I get the results?

The results are determined by your supervising consultant who will assess the injection the next time you see them in clinic following the procedure.

What if I decide not to have the procedure done?

If you decide not to go ahead with the procedure after you have had a chance to discuss any concerns you have with the radiologist, we will notify your referring doctor of your decision so that they can discuss the options for further treatment with you.

If you are diabetic

If you are diabetic please contact the:

Diabetes Centre

Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 12 noon on

 **0161 206 2095**

Do this as soon as you receive this appointment and ask to speak to a diabetes specialist nurse.

Failure to follow this advice may result in your appointment being cancelled.

What if I cannot attend for my appointment?

If you have any questions about your examination or cannot make the appointment, please telephone the help-line on:

 **0161 206 2044**

 **0161 206 2404**

Monday to Friday between 8.30am and to 4.00pm

If you are not able to telephone please contact us via email on:

 ***booking.radiology@srft.nhs.uk***

Please include your name, address, date of birth and hospital number (if known) on all correspondence

Please help us to cut our waiting lists. If you need to cancel or change your appointment call us as soon as you can, so that we can give it to another patient.

Interpreters

If you need an interpreter for your examination and/or procedure. This can be either verbal non-English language or non-verbal British Sign Language, Makaton etc.

Please call the department so that we can try to arrange this.

There is also information about interpretation services on the back of this booklet.

I need an ambulance, how do I arrange this?

If you need an ambulance there are contact details on your appointment letter.

Please inform the department, using the contact details in this booklet, if you are arriving by ambulance

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In accordance with the Equality Act we will make 'reasonable adjustments' to enable individuals with disabilities, to access this treatment / service.

If you need this interpreting please telephone

Polish

Jeżeli potrzebne jest Państwu tłumaczenie, proszę zadzwonić pod numer.

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس ترجمانی کی ضرورت ہے تو مہربانی کر کے فون کریں۔

Arabic

إذا كنتم بحاجة الى تفسير او ترجمة هذا الرجاء الاتصال

Chinese

如果需要翻译，请拨打电话

Farsi

اگر به ترجمه این نیاز دارید ، لطفاً تلفن کنید

0161 206 0224

Email: InterpretationandTrans@srft.nhs.uk

Under the Human Tissue Act 2004, consent will not be required from living patients from whom tissue has been taken for diagnosis or testing to use any left over tissue for the following purposes: clinical audit, education or training relating to human health, performance assessment, public health monitoring and quality assurance.

If you object to your tissue being used for any of the above purposes, please inform a member of staff immediately.

Salford Royal operates a smoke-free policy.

For advice on stopping smoking contact the Hospital Specialist Stop Smoking Service on 0161 206 1779

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<http://www.srft.nhs.uk/for-patients>