

Pain Service

Coeliac Plexus Block

What is a Coeliac Plexus Block?

A Coeliac Plexus Block is an injection of local anaesthetic around the sympathetic nerves which supply the organs within the abdomen (stomach). These nerves are located on either side of the spine in the thoracic region (chest) and are called the coeliac plexus.

Before the procedure

- Treatment takes place as an outpatient at the Ely Day Surgery Unit or Addenbrookes Pain Clinic.
- Your stay may be between two to four hours and before any treatment begins you will be asked to provide assurance that someone is able to drive you home.
- You will have a morning or an afternoon appointment.
- You will be asked to change into a theatre gown and your blood pressure and pulse will be recorded.
- Your doctor will then discuss the procedure with you and ask you to sign a consent form.

The procedure

- In the treatment room, you will have a small needle (Cannula) placed in the back of your hand. This allows the doctor to give you sedation and/or intravenous fluids if necessary.
- Once you are lying in the correct position the doctor will clean your back with an antiseptic solution which can feel very cold.
- The procedure will be carried out under x-ray screening.
- Local anaesthetic is injected into your back, which may sting at first, but the area will soon go numb. The spinal needles will then be put into position. You may feel a pushing sensation or some discomfort at this stage.
- Contrast (a solution which shows up under x-ray) is injected to make sure that the needle is in the correct position as seen on x-ray.
- This procedure will be repeated on the other side of your spine. When both needles are seen to be in the correct position local anaesthetic and steroid will be injected. This is the Coeliac Plexus Block.

Following the injection

- After the procedure you will be taken to the recovery area where the nursing staff will observe you.
- You may feel a little drowsy and wish to sleep.
- Your abdomen may feel strange and a little numb. This is perfectly normal.
- You will lie flat for about 45 minutes and then be assisted to sit up and offered light refreshment.
- Your blood pressure and pulse will be checked again before you get dressed.
- Before you leave, the doctor will see you again and ask a few questions about your pain and any effects that the injection may have had.

Please ensure that you have arranged for someone to drive you home after this procedure. Failure to do so will result in your procedure being cancelled.

If you have had sedation, we recommend that you arrange for someone to stay with you overnight and that you do not drive for 24 hours.

Possible side effects/risks

- Your blood pressure may be low after the Coeliac Plexus Block, but the nurses will check it regularly and before you go home.
- The digestive system is also affected by this procedure. If you have problems with sickness, this will usually improve but you may notice that your bowel movements are looser than usual.
- Other risks could include bleeding, infection, pain, temporary difficulty with sexual intercourse.

What to expect afterwards

- You may experience some backache from the injection sites after a Coeliac Plexus Block.
- Take your regular pain killers as usual.
- Try to keep on the move around the house but do not do anything too strenuous.
- As your pain decreases you should try to gently increase your exercise. Simple activities like a daily walk, using an exercise bike or swimming on your back will help to improve your muscle tone and strengthen your back. The best way is to increase your activity slowly.
- Try not to overdo things on a good day so that you end up paying for it with more pain the following day.

Follow up

A letter will be sent to your GP and one of the nurses will telephone you in approximately four weeks.

Points to remember

- You must have nothing to eat or drink for two hours prior to your appointment unless you have diabetes; in this instance, you must eat and drink as normal, and take your usual diabetes medication.
- Please bring your glasses if you need them for reading.
- Always bring a list of all current medication.
- Continue taking all your usual medication on treatment day unless advised to omit anything by the Pain Clinic.
- If there is any possibility you may be pregnant please inform the doctor or nurse.

Additional information

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. If you require more information or have any questions please speak to your doctor or contact the Pain Clinic.

Telephone number: 01223 217796



We are currently working towards a smoke-free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS Stop Smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk



Document history

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Department	Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ www.cuh.org.uk
Contact number	01223 217796
Publish/Review date	February 2011/February 2014 (no changes made, minor amendment made September 2011)
File name	Coeliac_plexus_block.doc
Version number/Ref	3/PIN1281