

Chronic Pain Clinic

Dorsal root ganglion block

What is a dorsal root ganglion block?

The nerves that carry sensation come out of the spinal cord and branch out to the different parts of the body. The dorsal root ganglion looks like a small swelling on the nerve where it joins the spinal cord. It is here that impulses from the nerves are transmitted through to the spinal cord.

Local anaesthetic can be injected into the dorsal root ganglion to slow down or block nerve impulses. Although this may help your pain initially, the effect will wear off. This procedure is done as a test to find out the exact area that is causing problems. If you get pain relief from this procedure it will help the doctor to decide which procedure to do next.

Before the procedure

- Treatment takes place as an outpatient at either Addenbrookes or Ely Hospital.
- 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 if you are undergoing injections.
- On arrival, you may be asked to complete questionnaires as part of an audit and to record improvements in pain levels.
- 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 may 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.
- 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.
- Local anaesthetic and steroid is then injected and a feeling of tightness may be felt. A cold spray may be used over the injection site once the procedure is completed.

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.
- You will lie flat for about 45 minutes with your blood pressure and pulse being monitored, you will then be assisted to sit up and offered light refreshment.
- 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

- Unfortunately, no procedure is risk free.
- Although long term side effects and complications are uncommon, they can occur.
- You may experience mild local tenderness at the site of the injection, though this will usually settle over the next few days.
- Other risks could include an increase in pain, infection, bruising, bleeding or nerve damage

What to expect afterwards

- Some rapid relief of your pain may be noticed due to the local anaesthetic. It could take several days before the steroid becomes effective.
- It is a good idea to take things easy for the rest of the day and avoid any strenuous activity.
- Take your regular pain killers as normal.
- Try to keep on the move about 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 a telephone appointment to review the effects of the injections will be posted to you.

Points to remember

- 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, such as medications that can thin your blood.
- 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. (The number below is generally manned 0800 – 1700 Monday to Friday; there is an answer machine out of hours, please leave a message and we will return your call).

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

Polish

Jeżeli chciałbyś uzyskać te informacje w innym języku, w dużej czcionce lub w formacie audio, poproś pracownika oddziału o kontakt z biurem Informacji Pacjenta (Patient Information) pod numerem telefonu: 01223 216032 lub pod adresem patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Portuguese

Se precisar desta informação noutra língua, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio, por favor peça ao departamento que contacte a secção de Informação aos Doentes (Patient Information) pelo telefone 01223 216032 ou através do e-mail patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Arabic

إذا كنت تود الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، بالأحرف الكبيرة أو بشكل شريط صوتي، يمكنك أن تطلب من القسم الاتصال بمعلومات المريض على الرقم: 01223216032 أو عبر البريد الإلكتروني: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Cantonese

如您需以另一語言版本、特大字體或錄音形式索取本資料，請要求部門聯絡病人諮詢服務：電話 01223 216032，電郵地址 patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Turkish

Eğer bu bilgileri başka bir dilde veya büyük baskılı veya sesli olarak isterseniz, lütfen bulunduğunuz bölümdeki görevlilere söyleyin Hasta Bilgilendirme servisini arasinlar: 01223 216032 veya patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Urdu

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی دیگر زبان میں، بڑے الفاظ میں یا آڈیو طریقہ سے درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی اس شعبہ سے پیشینٹ انفارمیشن سے ذیل کے ذریعہ رابطہ کرنے کی درخواست کریں: 01223 216032 یا patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য অন্য কোন ভাষায়, বড় অক্ষরে বা অডিও রেকর্ডিং পেতে চান তাহলে 'প্যাশেন্ট ইনফরমেশান' এর সঙ্গে 01223 216032 নম্বরে ফোন করে বা patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করে যোগাযোগ করার জন্য ডিপার্টমেন্টটিতে অনুরোধ জানান।

Document history

Authors	Pain Clinic Team
Department	Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ www.cuh.org.uk
Contact number	01223 217796
Publish/Review date	March 2010/March 2013
File name	Dorsal_root_ganglion_blocks
Version number/Ref	3/PIN1283