

Pain Service

Lumbar Sympathetic Block

What is a lumbar sympathetic block?

A lumbar sympathetic block is an injection sometimes used which may provide pain relief by blocking the pain-inducing sympathetic nerves in the lumbar (lower) region of the back.

Sympathetic nerves are responsible for controlling the automatic functions of our body skin temperature. The sympathetic nervous system can also be responsible for increasing pain long after an injury has healed.

Before the procedure

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

The procedure

This information leaflet is to be read in conjunction with the leaflet titled 'Advice to be read before your Pain Clinic injection treatment'.

- 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.
- Once this is confirmed local anaesthetic is injected and you may feel your leg begin to warm.

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 30 minutes and then be assisted to sit up and offered light refreshment.
- Your blood pressure and pulse will be checked frequently.
- You will be advised when to get dressed and will be given advice and a discharge leaflet when you are ready to go home.

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

- Not all the nerves leaving the vertebral column (backbone) carry pain messages.
- Some carry instructions to muscles in your legs. If these nerves are numbed by the injection then your legs can become heavy or weak. This side effect will only last a short time.

What to expect afterwards

- You may experience some soreness or ache from the injection site.
- Some people find that their pain initially feels worse for a few days (pain flare up) before it then settles.
- Take your regular pain killers and medications 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.
- 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

- 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 GP or contact the Pain Clinic.

Telephone number: 01223 217796



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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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