

Chronic Pain Clinic

Pulsed Radiofrequency

What is pulsed radiofrequency?

Pulsed radiofrequency is a technique designed to give long term relief of pain. We use it when we can identify one particular nerve or ganglion as the cause of your pain. The nerve is stunned by an intermittent electrical current from a special machine called a radiofrequency machine.

Before the procedure

- The procedure is usually carried out as an outpatient at Addenbrooke's Pain Clinic on level three.
- 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.
- You will have a morning or an afternoon appointment.
- On arrival, you will be asked to complete questionnaires as part of an audit and to record improvements in pain levels.
- You will then 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.
- A self-adhesive foil plate will be placed on your thigh. This is connected to the radio-frequency machine to make an electrical circuit.
- 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.
- A special hollow needle is inserted into your back and then a very thin wire will be threaded down inside the needle and attached at the other end to the machine.

- You will be asked to say when you can feel a tingling or twitching sensation as the doctor tests the machine on different settings. This is very important as it makes sure the tip of the needle is in exactly the right place.
- The machine settings will then be changed to pulsing for up to three minutes. You will feel this as a strong pulse in the area being treated.
- This process may be repeated at different points on your back. 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 then be offered light refreshment.
- Your blood pressure and pulse will be checked frequently.
- Before your departure a doctor will see you.

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.

What to expect afterwards

- You may find that your pain gets worse before it gets better.
- You may notice a feeling of numbness, heaviness or pins and needles. This is normal and will wear off.
- It may help to use a hot water bottle or an ice pack on the affected area.
- 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 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 doctor or contact the Pain Clinic.

Telephone number: 01223 217796



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. You cannot smoke on site. For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free, 0800 169 0 169

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Informacje te można otrzymać w innych językach, w wersji dużym drukiem lub audio. Zamówienia prosimy składać pod numerem: 01223 216032 lub wysyłając e-mail: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Polish

Se precisar desta informação num outro idioma, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio por favor telefone para o 01223 216032 ou envie uma mensagem para: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Portuguese

Если вам требуется эта информация на другом языке, крупным шрифтом или в аудиоформате, пожалуйста, обращайтесь по телефону 01223 216032 или на вебсайт patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Russian

若你需要此信息的其他語言版本、大字體版或音頻格式，請致電 01223 216032 或發郵件到: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Cantonese

Bu bilgiyi diger dillerde veya büyük baskılı ya da sesli formatta isterseniz lütfen su numaradan kontak kurun: 01223 216032 veya asagıdaki adrese e-posta gönderin: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Turkish

এই তথ্য বাংলায়, বড় অক্ষরে বা অডিও টেপে পেতে চাইলে দয়া করে 01223 216032 নম্বরে ফোন করুন বা patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করুন।

Bengali

Document history

Authors	The Chronic Pain Team
Department	Chronic Pain Service, Box 215, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ www.addenbrookes.org.uk
Contact number	01223 217796
Published	March 2009
Review date	March 2011
Supersedes which document?	Version 2, October 2006
Version number	3
Ref	PIN 1288