

Pain Service

Stellate Ganglion Block

What is a stellate ganglion injection?

A stellate ganglion injection is a type of injection which may provide pain relief for certain conditions affecting the arm, head and neck.

The term 'stellate ganglion' refers to one point on a chain of sympathetic nerves in the neck. The sympathetic nerves are responsible for controlling the automatic functions of our body, including our heart rate, blood pressure and skin temperature. They prepare the body for emergencies – the so called 'fight or flight' response. It seems that the sympathetic nerves also act to increase and maintain pain long after an injury has healed.

The nerves that go to the head, chest and arms join to form what is known as a ganglion in the neck. This is like a junction box of nerves. By 'blocking' or stopping the action of the sympathetic nerves in this area, injecting them with local anaesthetic, pain may be relieved.

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 after your injections.
- You will have a morning or an afternoon appointment.
- A doctor will discuss the procedure with you and ask you to sign a consent form.
- You will then 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 neck with an antiseptic solution which can feel very cold.

- A needle is then inserted just above the stellate ganglion in your neck.
- Once the needle is in the correct position the local anaesthetic will be injected. You may feel some slight discomfort but this should not be painful.

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 effects of the procedure

- Often patients experience flushing (redness) together with a slight drooping of the upper eyelid on the side of the injection. These effects are normal and only temporary. They indicate that the block is working well.
- A small nerve supplying the vocal cords may be numbed by the local anaesthetic. If this occurs you may experience some temporary hoarseness in your voice and an odd feeling on swallowing. This is temporary and will fully recover.
- You may experience some soreness 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.

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



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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