

Pain Service

Intercostal nerve block

What is an intercostal nerve block?

All of the ribs have nerves that closely travel underneath them from the spine at the back to the sternum (breastbone) at the front. These are called intercostal nerves. An intercostal nerve block is an injection of local anaesthetic and steroid which is given close to one of your intercostal nerves.

An intercostal nerve block is usually given if someone has chest wall pain over a localised area of the chest wall. This can occur after an attack of shingles or in the scar after an operation on the chest.

An intercostal nerve block is not a cure for the cause of your pain but it is used to help reduce the level of your pain.

Before the procedure

- You will be offered treatment as an outpatient at the Ely Day Surgery Unit or Addenbrookes Pain Clinic. This will be confirmed at your clinic appointment.
- Your stay may last between two to four hours. It is essential that that you arrange for an adult friend or relative to collect you by car or taxi. You will not be able to use the bus or train to travel home.
- You will then be asked to undress and put on a theatre gown. A doctor will then discuss the procedure with you and ask you to sign a consent form.

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'.

- Once 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 if necessary.
- The procedure will be carried out under x-ray screening. This allows the doctor to identify the specific level to be treated.
- The level of treatment is determined by where the pain is.
- Once you are lying in the correct position the doctor will clean the area with an antiseptic solution which can feel very cold.
- Local anaesthetic is injected into the area which may sting at first, but the area will soon go numb. A needle is then inserted under x-ray control into the correct position. You may feel a pushing sensation or some discomfort at this stage.

- Once the needle is in the correct position local anaesthetic and steroid are injected. A feeling of tightness may be experienced. You should let the doctor know if you feel pain.

Following the injection

- After the procedure you will be taken to the recovery area. You may feel a little drowsy and wish to sleep.
- The nursing staff will observe you and you may rest for about thirty minutes.
- When sitting up you will be offered light refreshment.
- You will then be free 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/risks

- Unfortunately, no procedure is risk free.
- Although long term side effects and complications are uncommon, they can occur.
- You may have mild local tenderness at the site of the injection. This will usually settle over the next few days.
- There is a small but definite chance of puncturing the lung. This can be dealt with, but may require a stay in hospital.

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.
- Take your regular pain killers as normal.
- If this injection relieves your pain please remember that it is not a cure. Do not do strenuous activities immediately, but build up your activity level slowly.
- Simple activities like a daily walk or swimming will help to improve your muscle tone. The best way is to increase your activity slowly.

Follow up

A letter will be sent to your GP about your injection. You will receive an appointment for a telephone consultation with one of the Pain Clinic nurses. This telephone appointment will take place approximately four weeks after your injection.

Points to remember

- Please bring your glasses if you need them for reading.
- Always bring a list of all current medications.
- Continue taking all your usual medication on treatment day, unless you have been contacted and advised otherwise.
- 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 contact the Pain Clinic. (The number below is generally manned 08:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday; there is an answer machine out of hours, please leave a message and we will return your call).

Telephone number: 01223 216993



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

如您需要以另一語言版本、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 arasınlar: 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: 01223 216032 یا patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk کی درخواست کریں:

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য অন্য কোন ভাষায়, বড় অক্ষরে বা অডিও রেকর্ডিং পোতে 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।

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