



Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Patient Information

# Nerve Root Block Injection

Welcome to the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital (ROH).  
For further information please visit [www.roh.nhs.uk](http://www.roh.nhs.uk)

## What is a nerve root block injection?

This is an injection around the nerve root as it leaves the spine.

## Why do I need to have the injection?

The injection is usually done to relieve pain and inflammation around the nerve. It is used to help leg pain (sciatica) and paraesthesia (pins and needles) and is sometimes used for back pain. The injection may also be useful to help diagnose the source of your pain.

## Who does this procedure?

The injection is usually done by a doctor in the injection room on the Admissions and Day Case Unit (ADCU). They will use an X-ray machine to guide the injection.

## What is injected?

- An anti-inflammatory drug (steroid)
- A local anaesthetic.
- A small quantity of dye is also injected so that the Doctor can be sure that the injection is around the nerve

The local anaesthetic will be responsible for any immediate relief of symptoms. When this wears off the pain may return before the benefits of the anti-inflammatory is felt. The anti-inflammatory drug may take up to 6 weeks to work.

Pain may return after some time. If this occurs a decision will then be made about repeating the nerve root injection or considering other possible treatments.

## Important information

Please inform the ADCU staff if you are:

- diabetic,
- feel unwell,
- have an infection, cold or persistent cough,
- have any allergies,
- taking any of the following medication **Antibiotics, Aspirin, Warfarin or Clopidogrel** or any other tablets used to thin the blood (**some of these may need to be stopped some days before**).

**Failure to do so may result in the procedure being cancelled.**

As it is necessary to use X-rays during this procedure, you must inform the clinician referring you if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant. If you find you are pregnant before the procedure, please inform the ADCU staff.

## What are the risks of this procedure?

Possible risks are:

- Infection.
- Damage to the small veins on insertion of the needle.

- Bleeding causing local bruising or bleeding around the nerve.
- Damage to the lining around the nerve which may cause a severe headache for a few days.
- Nerve damage.
- Allergic reaction to the injection which may be mild or life threatening (anaphylaxis)
- Urinary complications (incontinence or difficulty emptying your bladder).
- If you are diabetic then the injection may raise your glucose levels. These should be monitored for up to 1 month after the injection. If there are any changes in your diabetic symptoms please consult your GP.
- Facial flushing for a few days.
- Temporary discomfort for a few days after your injection.
- For females - temporary alteration of your menstrual cycle.

### **Please note**

**Risks from having a nerve root block are small.**

Please discuss any concerns with the clinician looking after you.

### **On the day of your procedure**

- Please arrive at ADCU no more than 10 minutes before your appointment time as the waiting area is limited.
- If you are brought in by a relative or friend, they can accompany you to the admission reception, where you will be booked in and handed in to the care of the ADCU team. Please ensure your relative or friend is aware that there is waiting space for **patients only** in ADCU.
- Relatives/friends wishing to stay on site are kindly asked to leave the Admissions Unit and are welcome to use the restaurant facilities in the main hospital building. Long stay parking is available at Gate A and C.  
We ask for only **one nominated relative/friend** to contact us for updates (e.g. progress, expected discharge time).

Relatives are free to contact **ADCU** for updates on **0121 685 4080**.

- We have in excess of 40 patients attending this unit per day and would welcome your co-operation. Thank you.
- You can eat and drink normally before arriving although you won't be offered anything once admitted. This is to aid your comfort during the procedure and is an additional safety measure in case of complications.
- Take any medication as normal unless advised otherwise. Bring a list of your tablets with you.
- You will be admitted to ADCU and assessed by a nurse. This is to make sure you are fit and ready for the nerve root block injection. You will have the opportunity to ask any questions at this stage.
- The doctor carrying out your nerve root block injection will also see you before you have the procedure.
- You need to be prepared to be on the ADCU for between 2 - 4 hours. This time may vary depending on individual circumstances.

### **What the procedure involves**

- You will be lying on your front for the procedure, which usually takes 10-20 minutes. Local anaesthetic is injected into the skin and a fine needle is passed toward the nerve root under X-ray guidance.
- Once the needle is confirmed to be close to the nerve, the injection takes place.

### **What happens after your procedure**

You will be monitored by the nursing staff on ADCU, until you are ready to go home (about 30 minutes).

### **Please note:**

**You must not drive yourself home or use public transport.**

For your own well being we advise that you are collected by a relative or friend. Hospital transport can only be booked if there is a medical need and you meet the set criteria.

### **Back at home**

It is important that you take things easy for the rest of the day. Do not do any excessive exercise or heavy work for the first few days.

If a dressing is in place, remove the dressing the morning following your procedure.

Continue to take your pain relief tablets until you notice an improvement in your symptoms.

### **Follow up appointment**

Need for a follow up appointment will be discussed before you are discharged.

### **Can't make your appointment?**

If for any reason you cannot make your appointment you must let the ADCU scheduled care coordinator know as soon as possible on 0121 685 4334.

Mon-Fri 8.30am to 4.00pm

This will enable the vacant appointment to be filled by someone else. Your appointment will not be automatically re-booked unless you call to tell us you are not coming.

### **Who do I contact if I have any problems following the procedure?**

From 9am – 5pm you can either speak to a nurse on the ADCU on 0121 685 4080 or contact the secretary for the clinician you are under.

Outside these hours contact the 'bleep holder' through switchboard at the ROH (0121 685 4000)

### **Patient Support**

Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offers help, support and advice to patients, their relative, friends and carers. PALS can help answer questions you have about hospital

services; respond to problems or concerns; and welcome your suggestions or comments, both positive and negative.

PALS can be contacted by phone, Monday to Friday, 8.30am and 4.30pm. See contact details below.

### **Patient Experience**

As a hospital we are committed to listening to the views of our patients and using the feedback to inform service improvement plans. You may be asked to complete a number of surveys at different stages during your treatment.

Please help us by completing the questionnaires. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

### **Contact Numbers**

PALS	0121 685 4128
ADCU scheduled care coordinator	0121 685 4334
ADCU	0121 685 4080