


Diagnostic Median branch block injections for back or neck pain



Information for patients

This information leaflet explains about diagnostic median branch block injections for the treatment of back or neck pain. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to any member of the team caring for you.

Confirming your identity

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your **name** and **date of birth** and check your **ID band**. If you don't have an ID band we will also ask you to confirm your address.

If we don't ask these questions, then please ask us to check.

Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

What are diagnostic median branch block injections?

Median branch nerve supplies small joints in your spine called facet joints which sends pain signals to your brain.. These joints allow movement and maintain stability, Wear and tear on your facet joints as well as inflammation and injury can cause pain.

Why do I need diagnostic median branch block injections?

Having these injections can:

- Help us to find the source of your pain. If the injections greatly reduce your pain for a short time, we will consider offering you another procedure called radiofrequency denervation. This aims to give you longer lasting pain relief. It uses radio waves to produce an electric current that heats your nerves and alters how they work.
- Give you a pain-free period during which you can exercise and engage with physiotherapy.

What are the risks?

- **Failure:** in half of the cases the injections may not work well.
- **Worsening of pain:** your pain may get worse before it gets better and it can take up to 2 - 4 weeks and it is quite common.
- **Pain and bruising:** you may have pain and bruising at the site of the injections which will wear off in 3 - 5 days.
- **Effects of the steroid:** it can cause short-term effects such as a flushed face or an increase in your blood sugar if you are diabetic.
- **Infection:** this does not happen very often.
- **Leg or arm weakness:** this happens rarely.
- **Injury to or collapse of your lung (pneumothorax):** this applies only if you are having injections in your mid back (thoracic area). This happens rarely.



Are there any alternatives?

Yes, you can manage your pain with medications and exercises.

What happens during the procedure?

You will have the injections in one of our Day Surgery Centre theatres.

In the theatres your details and consent form will be rechecked. We will monitor your heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen in blood if required and as a precautionary measure may insert a thin plastic tube (cannula).

X-ray or ultrasound will be used to confirm the exact location of the needle. If you are a woman aged under 55 and you think you may be pregnant, please tell us as x-rays can harm unborn children.

We will ask you to lie face down on a bed and then carefully position you. We will clean the area where we are going to inject you (injection site) and drape sterile cloth around the area.

We will give you a local anaesthetic injection to numb your skin before the injection. If you would like conscious sedation or gas and air, Please discuss with the clinician on your outpatient appointment visit.

How long does the procedure take?

It can take up to/between 15 - 30 minutes but in certain circumstances it can take longer. You will be at the hospital for 3 - 4 hours but you will not stay overnight.

What happens after the procedure?

We will move you to the recovery area, where the nurse will check your heart rate and blood pressure. If all is well, you will be moved back to the ward and reviewed by the Pain Consultant before we discharge you home.

You will need someone to accompany you home and look after you for the first 24hrs.

Consent

We must by law obtain your written consent to any operation and some other procedures beforehand. Staff will explain the risks, benefits and alternatives before they ask you to sign a consent form. If you are unsure about any aspect of the treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to ask to speak with a senior member of staff again.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

Depending on how successful the procedure has been, one of three things will happen.

1. We will discharge you from our care.
2. We will book you in for another procedure, radiofrequency denervation.
3. We will ask you to come to the Pain Clinic to be seen by our Pain Team.

Who can I contact with queries or concerns?

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact the Pain office on 020 3299 3605.



Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. The PALS office is on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you. PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS.

Tel: **020 3299 3601**

Email: **kch-tr.PALS@nhs.net**

You can also contact us by using our online form at
www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.



