

Nerve Root Injections

Radiology Department Patient information

What is a nerve root injection?

A nerve root injection or block is an injection of local anaesthetic and steroids around the origin of where the nerve leaves the spine. The area around a nerve root can become irritated or compressed, causing pain or abnormal sensations usually around the buttocks and down the legs.

Why am I having a nerve root injection?

You have been referred for a nerve root injection by the doctor looking after you to help in the treatment of your pain.

Who will carry out the procedure?

A specially trained doctor called a Radiologist will perform the procedure. They are trained to interpret x-rays which they use during the procedure. The doctor will talk through the procedure with you beforehand with you and you can ask any questions you may have.

How do I prepare for the nerve root injection?

You can eat and drink as normal. Do not need to stop any medication prior to the procedure. When you arrive for your appointment you may be asked to change into a hospital gown. It is important that you have someone with you, as you must not drive to or from the appointment.

What happens during the nerve block injection?

You will be asked to lay on your front on the x-ray table. The area being treated will then be cleaned with an antiseptic solution. The radiologist will numb the skin using local anaesthetic, this will sting for a few seconds before going numb, and although you should not feel pain you may still be able to feel pressure. The radiologist will use x-ray guidance to place a fine needle through the skin and into the correct position. They will then inject the steroid and a local anaesthetic around the nerve root. The needle is then removed the area cleaned and a small dressing applied.

How long will it take?

Each patient's situation is different but as a guide it will take around 30 minutes.

Will it hurt?

The radiologist will use a local anaesthetic on the skin which will sting for a short time before going numb. Unfortunately you may still feel a bit of discomfort during the procedure. Staff will be with you so let them know if it's painful, but any pain should be for a short period of time only.

What happens after the procedure?

When the procedure is finished the staff will ask you to carefully sit, then stand down from the x-ray table. You will be asked to sit outside in the waiting room for about 20-30 minutes after which one of the x-ray nurses will check on you. You will be given a pain diary to take home with you to record how the injection has affected your pain over the next two weeks. You are asked to return this to the consultant in the envelope provided. All of this will be explained again at the time.

How long will the effects of the nerve root injection last?

This is not any easy question to answer as each patient may find different levels of relief. The injection may reduce or remove the symptoms for a few days, weeks or even months

What are the risks or complications?

The procedure is carried out under sterile conditions but there is still a very slight risk of infection at the injection site. If the area becomes red or warm please contact your GP. The local anaesthetic that is injected with the steroids can sometimes cause numbness or weakness in the side injected. This usually wears off after a few minutes. The staff looking after you will check before letting you go home.

This leaflet has hopefully answered some of your questions and concerns. It is important to discuss your procedure with the doctor looking after you and do not be afraid to ask any questions you may have before or during your appointment.

Useful Phone Numbers

Royal Bournemouth Hospital switchboard: **0300 019 3626**

Radiology Appointments: **0300 019 4286**

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