

## PATIENT INFORMATION



### NERVE ROOT BLOCK INJECTION

Nerve root block injections are used as a pain relief tool for people in significant trouble with pain radiating down into one or both legs. They are used when the nerves going down the legs are irritated by being in a tight space as they leave the spine, such as in foraminal stenosis, or if the nerves are compressed by a disc prolapse (bulge).

The injection can help reduce pain, swelling, inflammation, pressure and irritation allowing you to go back to everyday activities and function. It can also be a useful diagnostic tool to help identify the site of your pain. The injections are performed as a day case procedure under sedation, which means you can go home the same day.

The spine is composed of 24 bones called vertebrae, which are the block shaped bones with rigid discs in-between them. The exit foramina (holes), where the nerves leave the spine, lie between the vertebrae that form the skeleton of the spine. The inter-vertebral discs are adjacent to these foramina. Medicines put into this space, where the nerves leave the spine can have a direct action on the nerves themselves.



### BEFORE

Please advise us of any medical conditions you have prior to your admission such as high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, heart problems etc. To avoid bleeding around the spinal nerves it is important to stop blood-thinning medication such as Warfarin. This needs to be discussed with Mr Quaile before your procedure takes place. Also it is very important that we have a complete list of medications that you have been prescribed by your doctor or have bought at the chemist and are currently taking. This includes homeopathic remedies.

If you feel unwell on the day then please contact Mr Quaile's office or the hospital before you make the journey in, as it may be necessary to re-schedule the procedure.

Follow the fasting instructions that you have been given by Mr Quaile's office or the hospital.

### ON THE DAY

On the day of your procedure please arrive promptly. Please remember you will not be able to drive home after the procedure and if you are taking a taxi you will need to be accompanied. You are very welcome to bring someone along with you for company.

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Bring x rays or scans of your spine with you, unless you have been investigated in a BMI hospital in which case we have access to your scans.

At the time of admission you will be asked to complete various forms. Mr Quail will visit you on the ward prior to treatment and he will explain the procedure to you in full and then ask you to sign the consent form to confirm you are happy to proceed. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions or mention concerns that you may have at this time. The site of the injection will be marked up before the procedure to ensure accuracy.

You will be taken to the operating theatre as nerve root block injections need to be done in a clean area. The procedure takes about 15-30 minutes depending upon how many nerve root blocks are being carried out and whether a caudal epidural is being performed at the same time. A small needle may be placed in a vein on the back of your hand to give you the sedation and fluid or other medicines if necessary.

Sedation will then be given, which will make you feel very sleepy so that you may not remember the procedure. The injection site will be cleaned with antiseptic solution. The nerve root injection is done under x ray control to guide the correct placement of the needle around the nerves and a mix of local anaesthetic and slow release steroids are then injected.

Once you are back on the ward and awake you will be offered something to eat and drink. After that you should be able to get up and walk unaided. You may feel some weakness, numbness, tingling and some heaviness in your back and legs after this procedure. It may also be difficult to pass urine for a while. This is normal and should go after 2-3 hours when the local anaesthetic wears off.

You are required to stay in hospital for a period of 2-3 hours after the procedure depending on your recovery.

### **AFTER**

You will need someone to take you home and you should have a responsible adult to care for you on your first night at home.

We recommend that you rest for the next 24 hours and in particular try to avoid bending, twisting or lifting. We also advise that, due to the effects of sedation, you should not drive a car, drink any alcohol, operate equipment or sign legal documents during this time.

*If you have a small dressing or plaster over the injection area this can be removed the next day.*

*You should continue to take your usual medication and analgesia as required.*

*You can return to work as soon as you feel you can cope.*

*Avoid any strenuous exercise for a week after the procedure.*

*A follow up appointment will be made for you three weeks post injection.*

There is a possibility that the leg supplied by the nerve injected may feel weak or numb after the procedure, but this should resolve as the anaesthetic wears off. If you are concerned please do not hesitate to contact us or the hospital.



**WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT**

Some people experience immediate relief of their symptoms that can last for weeks or months, others find it takes about six weeks or so before they find any relief and for others regrettably there is little or no benefit. No treatment is guaranteed to work for all. However it can be the start of an effective treatment plan in improving pain by allowing you a ‘window of opportunity’ for rehabilitation via physical therapy to occur. We advise that you start or return to a good exercise plan as soon as possible as this will hopefully reduce your symptoms and strengthen your core. Mr Quail may recommend a short course of physiotherapy, as the physiotherapist will be able to advise you regarding the most appropriate exercises for you.

**SIDE EFFECTS AND RISKS**

Rarely some people develop a headache after the injection which may be due to a spinal fluid leak. This is treated by bedrest or by a blood patch if the headache persists. Please inform the staff immediately if this happens whilst you are on the ward or telephone your GP if you are at home.

There are very small risks of infection, bleeding, nerve damage, allergic reaction to the medication given and blood clots. Whilst these risks are very small, the consequences may be serious. There is also a very rare complication of the local anaesthetic interfering with breathing which would be temporary as the effects wear off.



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**EMERGENCY INFORMATION**

If you develop any of these following symptoms following your discharge please contact your general practitioner immediately:

- Severe headache or pain
- Fever or chills
- Redness and swelling around the injection site
- Loss of bladder or bowel control
- Numbness in the saddle area
- Numbness in legs or arms
- Weakness in legs or arms
- Pins and needles in legs or arms

**CONTACT**

Please contact us if you have any problems or questions.

email: support@spine-works.com



telephone: 01256 377653

