

Why do I need an injection?

To relieve inflammation and pain in the affected area, a steroid is injected around the nerve in your back or neck which supplies the leg or arm. The injection is to help arm or leg pain, not neck or back pain.

Steroid injections can be combined with a local anaesthetic. The local anaesthetic does not reduce inflammation but may allow almost immediate, but temporary, pain relief.

We offer injections usually when you have tried medication first (please discuss this with your referrer).

How quickly will the injection work?

If a local anaesthetic is used, a numbness may start within a few minutes, lasting a few hours.

The effect of the steroid is usually noticeable within several days to a week, but there may be continued gradual improvement over a few weeks.

How long will the beneficial effects last?

The injection may help to control pain during the time that your condition takes to resolve naturally. This benefit may last from a few weeks to several months.

Are there any side effects?

Side effects are rare and usually short lived. Some potential side effects are:

- **Post injection flare up of pain**
This may last for up to 48 hours and usually settles by itself. Take medication such as Paracetamol and Ibuprofen. If the pain persists consult your GP. If the pain worsens and/or you develop leg/arm weakness contact your GP immediately.

- **Discoloration and thinning of the skin**
If the soft tissue injection is near the skin surface, you may experience local whitening and thinning of the skin. This can be permanent and is more noticeable if you have dark skin.
- **Infection**
There is a very small risk of infection. If you develop swelling, redness and heat around the injection site or feel unwell, please contact your GP or Out of Hours' service.
- **Rise in blood sugar**
Any steroid injection can temporarily raise blood sugar levels for those with diabetes. If you are taking insulin you may need to increase your dose for a day or two.
- **Anaphylactic shock**
(An extreme but rare allergic reaction). This usually happens quickly, shortly after the injection has been given and is why we ask you to wait for 30 minutes after the injection has been given.
- **Bleeding**
This is a small risk which is increased if you are taking drugs that thin the blood (such as Aspirin, Clopidogrel or Warfarin). If you experience any leg weakness, loss of control of your bowels or bladder or any numbness around your buttocks and genitalia, contact your GP immediately.
- **Nerve damage**
It is rare that this is serious. You will have the injection whilst you are awake so you can tell us if there is any pain.
- **Headache**
This can occur with epidurals only. It can be severe and may need a further epidural to treat it. Please discuss with your GP.

Do I need to rest after the injection?

You are advised to maintain gentle activity for the first week following treatment. Avoid those activities and exercises which have previously worsened your symptoms. You may return to work as soon as you feel comfortable.

Are there any reasons why an injection may not be suitable?

An injection may not be suitable if you have:

- An infection, either local or general.
- Taken antibiotics in the last two weeks.
- An allergy to either the local anaesthetic or steroid.
- Your pain has got better.

Are there any reasons why an injection should be given with caution?

Any injection will be given with caution if:

- You have diabetes
- You have a bleeding disorder or take Warfarin.
- There has been trauma within the last 6 weeks or you have bleeding in your joint.

Can the injection be repeated?

We usually offer only one injection. Recent studies show that repeated injections do not work.

What arrangement do I need in place for when I come in?

You will receive your injection under a local anaesthetic and we request that you have **nothing to eat or drink** 6 hours prior to the admission time. You may, however, drink water, clear fluids include water, squash and diluted fruit juice without pulp up to 2 hours before admission. We request you have nothing that contains fat, milk or alcohol.



We advise patients **not to drive for 24 hours** following this procedure, so please do not drive yourself to the hospital but arrange for someone to bring and collect you. Please also ensure that someone stays with you for 24 hours after your discharge.

Please bring with you:

- A dressing gown, slippers and any toiletries you may need.
- A list of any tablets/medicines/inhalers that you are currently taking.

Please have a bath or shower before you come into hospital.

Important Note:

If you are taking any anticoagulant medication such as **Warfarin or Clopidogrel**, please contact your GP as soon as possible as you will need to **stop taking this for 7 days** prior to your admission.

If you are **taking Rivaroxaban, Dabigatran or Apixaban** you will need to **stop taking this for 48 hours** prior to your admission.

If you are taking Warfarin you will need to have your INR checked at your GP surgery the day before your admission. You must telephone the Pain Service (01823 344147) with the result. Your INR needs to be 1.2 or below.

Failure to have your INR tested at your GP surgery the day before, failure to telephone with the result or a result that is greater than 1.2 will result in postponement of your injection.

If you are an insulin dependent diabetic please telephone the Day Surgery Centre on 01823 342765 for specific eating instructions prior to your admission.

What happens on the day?

Please take any prescribed medicines unless you have been advised otherwise.

Patients going to the Day Surgery Centre should report at the time stated on their admission letter. Please note, the appointment time is a check in time and that there may be up to a two – three hour wait. **If you are unable to attend, decide you do not want the injection or become unwell, you should telephone 01823 344147 giving as much notice as possible.**

There is a drop-off point outside the main entrance of the Day Surgery Centre. Please report to reception on arrival, where your details will be checked and you will be shown into the ward. You will see the clinician, so if you have any questions for them, they will be able to discuss them with you before your procedure. You will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm that you are happy to go ahead with the procedure. You will wear a hospital gown and will walk to the anaesthetic room if you are able.

What happens after your injection?

You will either spend some time in recovery or you may return straight to the ward. Once you feel well enough, you will be offered a drink and some toast. If you have any special dietary requirements (e.g. Soya milk) please bring your own supply. The Day Surgery Centre staff will tell you what time you will be ready to go home.

**Somerset Community Pain Management Service
Taunton and Somerset NHS Trust
Musgrove Park
Taunton**

Secretary: 01823 34(4147)

The Day Surgery Centre

Nerve Root and Epidural Injections