

Patient Information: Nerve Root Injection

What is a Nerve Root Injection?

At each level of the **lumbar spine** a **nerve root** passes out to supply the legs with sensation and muscle power. The nerve root can become irritated or compressed causing pain, loss of sensation or weakness in the legs. A **steroid injection** to the nerve root may help relieve your symptoms.

What does it involve?

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

What is Injected?

- A small quantity of **dye** (which can be seen on the **xray images**) is used to confirm that the injection is around the nerve root.
- **Local Anaesthetic** – injected around the nerve root.
- **Steroid** – injected around the nerve root.

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Does it Work?

The injection may be used primarily to diagnose the source of your pain or as a potential treatment when it is known from the clinical findings and investigations to be the source of pain. The **local anaesthetic** numbs the nerve root so if it is the source of pain, you should experience significant pain relief within **15 minutes** of the injection, which may last for a few hours. Again, IF the nerve root is a source of pain then there may be some prolonged pain relief from the steroid which may last **several weeks**. The pain may return after some time and a decision will then be made to consider repeating it (if there is considered to be a chance of your pain settling naturally) or progressing to further interventions such as nucleoplasty or surgery.

Risks and Side Effects:

Due to the procedure:

- Infection – rare.
- More discomfort for the first few days after your injection.
- Bruising to the injection area.
- Leg numbness and weakness are common and can last a few hours.
- Temporary difficulty taking weight through the injected side.
- Allergy to injected medication.

Due to the injected steroid:

- Facial flushing for a few days.
- Temporary alteration of your usual menstrual cycle (females).
- Temporary increase in your sugar levels (diabetics).

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What Happens on the Day of My Appointment?

- **You can eat and drink.**
- Take all your tablets as normal. Bring a list of your tablets with you.
- Please bring a **dressing gown** and **sensible footwear** with you. You will be asked to walk to the treatment room on the Day Unit.
- After you have had your procedure, you will need to stay with us for about **30 minutes** before you can go home.
- A nurse will take some details from you to check that you are fit for your procedure.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form. The doctor will be able to answer any questions you may have at this time.
- You will be at the **Day Unit** or **radiology** department for about **1 - 2 hours**. This time may vary depending on unforeseen circumstances.

You must **NOT** drive home or go home on public transport.

Please arrange for someone to collect you from the Day Unit.

You are allowed to go home by taxi.

After Your Injection

- Take things easy for the rest of the day. Do not do any excessive exercise or heavy work for the first few days.
- Remove the dressing the next morning.
- Continue to take your pain tablets till you notice any improvement in your symptoms.

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Important Information

Please inform the Day Unit if you are **diabetic**, have a **cough** or **cold** or have any kind of **infection**.

You must inform us if you are taking any of the following tablets – **antibiotics, aspirin, warfarin** or **clopidogrel** before attending as some of these may need to be stopped some days before.

Information for females - We will need to know the start date of your last menstrual period due to the use of x-ray equipment. If you think you might be pregnant, contact the Day Unit for advice.

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