



Local anaesthetic ‘nerve block’ injection for neuropathic pain: information for children and young people

This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) tells you about ‘nerve block injections’. These are often suggested when someone has neuropathic (nerve) pain. This means that the nerves are sending pain messages to your brain, even if there is nothing wrong. The nerve block gets in the way of the pain signals going to your brain.

There are lots of different types of nerve block injection, each aimed at different groups of nerves. We often suggest using a combination of physiotherapy, coping techniques and medications alongside nerve blocks.

As the nerve block involves an injection into or near the painful area, we may suggest that you have a general anaesthetic or breathe in Entonox® (‘gas and air’) – we will talk to you about which option will be best for you. The doctors will explain the nerve block procedure again and answer any questions.

What does the injection involve?

- If you are having a general anaesthetic, you will go to the operating theatre
- If you are having Entonox®, you will stay on the ward

The doctor will clean your skin over the injection site and then put in a small needle. They will inject the nerve block medicine and then take out the needle.

Could anything go wrong?

Having a nerve block is a minor procedure but there is a small chance of:

- Bleeding if a blood vessel is injured – this will usually stop after putting pressure on the area for a few minutes
- Infection around the injection site – if this happens, we will give you some antibiotic medicine
- Longer lasting numbness – this will usually improve over the next few weeks
- Allergic reaction – the skin around the injection site might feel red and itchy for a day or two
- Small patch of baldness – only if the injection is given in a hairy area of skin

It is even less common for long term problems to occur. If there are any other risks that apply to either the specific nerve block or to your medical condition, the doctor will talk to you about this beforehand.

What happens afterwards?

- If you are having a general anaesthetic, you will wake up in the recovery room next to the operating theatre
- If you are having Entonox®, the effects clear within a few minutes although you might still feel a bit wobbly

The doctor will come to the ward to see you after the injection. The ward nurses will check you regularly until you have recovered enough to go home.

Going home

You will usually be able to go home a few hours after the injection.

- Your skin may feel a bit sore and bruised – you can take pain relief if you want
- The area around the injection will feel numb, tingly, heavy and weak for a few days – try not to hurt yourself when you are numb and avoid anything very hot or cold

- You might want to support the area while it is still numb but keep it moving to stop any sore areas of skin

Tell an adult if:

- The area injected looks red, swollen or feels hotter than usual
- The area is oozing
- You are in a lot of pain and medicine is not helping
- You have a high temperature

What happens next?

You might not feel the full effects of the nerve block for four to six weeks. For some people, it does not work at all or only works a bit. When your pain nurse rings you after the injection, you can talk about whether you think it has worked or not.

If you think it has worked, we can give you another injection but we usually wait at least three months until the next one. If it has not worked as well as you wanted, we can explore different ways of managing the pain.

If you have any questions, please call the Pain Control Service on 020 7405 9200 extension 5940