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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
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University Health Board

Patient Information leaflet Caudal/Lumbar/Thoracic/ Cervical Epidural

Day Surgery Unit

You have been offered this procedure as part of your management plan which has been jointly discussed and agreed with your Consultant in Pain Medicine. Your pain is likely to respond to injection treatment if it is in a certain location in the body and is severe. Widespread or mild pain is not responding to injection treatment.

In all cases of managing chronic pain we aim at reduction of your symptoms so that you can achieve better mobility, reduce or discontinue medications, regain control of your life and improve its quality. Reduction of the severity of symptoms by 30% is considered to be successful in managing chronic pain. Pain relief procedures very seldom cure chronic pain. They help break the vicious circle of long-lasting pain symptoms but the duration of action cannot be predicted. The duration of treatment in which injection is considered appropriate will be no longer than 24 months in total.

It is also important to note that no procedure is risk free. Therefore injection treatment will not be repeated many times as the local anaesthetic and the steroid may cause side effects at the site of injection and when absorbed by the blood stream. Some of these effects include lower immunity, making you more vulnerable to infections caused by viruses and bacteria. This is specifically relevant in the current circumstances of COVID-19 pandemic.

Procedure specific risks are described in detail in the information leaflet. Please consider carefully the information provided below for the interventional procedure.

What is Caudal/Lumbar/Thoracic/Cervical Epidural?

Some types of pain are due to trapping or irritation of the nerves that come out of the spinal cord. An injection of a local anaesthetic and depo steroid around the lining of the spine, the epidural space, may help reduce your pain.

What does it involve?

You will be lying on your front or on your side for the procedure, which usually takes about 15 minutes. Local anaesthetic is injected into the skin and a needle is passed toward the spine in its lower, middle or upper part under x-ray guidance. It may feel a little uncomfortable but it is essential you keep still. After the correct position of the needle is checked, you will be given a local anaesthetic/depo steroid mixture. The injection site will be covered with sterile dressing.

Does it work and for how long?

You may not feel any benefit for 3-7 days. Symptoms can be relieved for up to 3-4 months or longer in about half of all patients.

What happens on the day?

- You can eat and drink normally.
- Take all your tablets as normal unless instructed otherwise. Bring a list of your tablets with you.
- You will be asked to change in a hospital gown. 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 taken on a trolley to theatre.
- After you have had your procedure, you will need to stay with us for about 1 hour before you can go home.
- You must not self drive or go home on public transport. Have a responsible adult to stay with you on the day.

What to do after the procedure?

After your procedure take things easy for the rest of the day. Do not do any excessive exercise or heavy work for the first few days. Keep the injection site clean and dry. Remove the dressing after 24 hours.

Continue to take your pain tablets until you notice improvement in your symptoms.

You will be followed either by telephone appointment with a specialist nurse, or by your consultant in outpatients' clinic.

Side effects and complications:

Due to the procedure:-

Common

- Soreness / bruising at the injection site
- Temporary increase of pain (up to 10 days)

Rare

- Headache
- Haematoma
- Infection at the injection site
- Allergic reaction
- New pain
- Worsening pain

Very rare

- Convulsions (fits)
- Temporary or permanent disabling nerve damage
- Cardiac arrest (stopping of the heart)

Due to the injected steroid:-

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

You must tell us if:-

- You may be pregnant.
- You are taking warfarin / clopidogrel.
- You have an allergy to latex, medicines and food.
- Your medical condition has changed since you last saw the consultant.
- You suffer from epilepsy.
- You suffer from diabetes.
- You have cold or temperature.
- You are treated with antibiotics.
- You have been admitted to hospital.

- You are a wheelchair user and you might need a help with getting out of it.
- You are hard of hearing/deaf.
- You are partially sighted/registered blind.
- You need an interpreter.
- You are very nervous about needles, hospitals or medical practitioners.

For more information contact:-

Royal Gwent Hospital on:- 01633 - 234938

Consultants: Dr. Tzvetanka Ivanova-Stoilova / Dr. Sonia Wartan

Nevill Hall Hospital:- 01873 – 732979

Consultants: Dr. Sue Jeffs / Dr. Mandar Joshi