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University Health Board

## Patient Information

# Lumbar Sympathetic Block

## 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.

### **Lumbar Sympathetic Block and how it works**

Some pains are caused by a part of the nervous system over which we have no conscious control - the sympathetic nervous system. Problems with these nerves may cause certain types of pain in the leg, or lower bowel, or poor circulation to the legs. These types of pains may be

helped by an injection of local anaesthetic or chemicals into these nerves.

## **What happens on the day?**

- Details of your appointment will be arranged after your attendance at the Pain Clinic. You will be sent a letter to attend for the injection. Please have nothing to eat from midnight, have a drink of water or squash no later than 7.00am if your procedure will be in the morning. If your procedure will be in the afternoon you should not eat from 08.00 am and your last drink should be no later than 12.00 am (water or squash). You should bring the list of your medication with you.
- Please report to reception in Day Surgery Unit as specified in your letter. You will be taken to the ward and asked to change in hospital gown. A nurse will take some details from you to check that you are fit for your procedure. Then 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. A small needle will be placed in a vein on the back of your hand.
- You will be asked to lie on your front or side. The doctor will clean the skin with sterilizing solution and will put drapes around the site of your injection. A local anaesthetic will be injected into the area of your lower back and then the procedure will be performed using x-ray pictures and special dye to place the needles in the correct area. The procedure takes about 30 minutes. If you feel uncomfortable, let us know but remain very still.
- You will return to the ward to rest, where your blood pressure will be measured regularly for 30 minutes. You will be able to eat and drink after that but need to remain on the Ward for further one hour. You should have somebody to take you home, as you will not be able to drive yourself.
- 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.

## **What to expect afterwards**

You will probably be uncomfortable for 48 hours after the treatment and then this should gradually start to settle down. A small number of patients develop pain in the upper thigh after treatment - if this happens, seek advice from the Pain Clinic staff.

After your treatment you will be reviewed in the Pain Clinic.

## **What are the side effects / complications?**

### **Common**

- Soreness / bruising at the injection site.
- Temporary increase (up to 7 days) in pain following procedure.
- Dizziness

### **Rare**

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

### **Very rare**

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

## **You must tell us if**

- You may be pregnant
- You have got allergies to medicines, food or latex
- You are taking warfarin / clopidogrel
- Your medical condition has changed since you last saw the consultant
- You suffer from epilepsy
- You suffer from diabetes
- If you have cold or temperature.
- 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 further information please contact:-

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