

Patient Information Occipital Nerve Block

Medical Day Case Unit/ 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 Occipital nerve block?

Occipital nerve block is an injection treatment used for reducing or relieving pain at the back of the head. It involves injection of a local

anaesthetic and steroid medication in the area of the occipital nerves which are located just underneath the scalp at the back of the head.

What happens on the day?

- Details of your appointment will be arranged by Pain Clinic staff after your attendance at the Pain Clinic. You will be sent a letter to attend for the injection.
- You may eat and drink normally before your treatment. Do not put any creams or rubs on the day of your treatment. **Please bring somebody with you to drive you back home. You should not self drive or use public transport.**
- On the day of treatment please report to reception at the Medical Day Case Unit (RGH) /Day Surgery Unit (NHH) at the arranged time and as indicated in your letter. You should bring the list of your medication with you.
- You will be checked by a nurse that you are fit for the procedure. Your doctor will see you and answer any questions or queries you might have. You will then be asked to sign your consent form.
- Then you will be taken through to the treatment area, and asked to sit with your head bent forward. You will be given a pillow to support your head. The doctor will then clean the skin with antiseptic and inject the local anaesthetic and steroid mixture at the back of your head on the affected side. The injection can be done bilaterally depending on your pain symptoms.
- You will then be asked to rest for up to 20 minutes.
- When you are feeling comfortable you will be allowed to go home.
- After your treatment you will be followed up by the pain service to assess the effects of the injection treatment.

What to expect afterwards?

Immediately after the injection, the back of your head may feel warm and numb. You may also experience reduction in the pain. The local anaesthetic wears off in a few hours and the steroid usually takes 3-7 days to take effect.

The pain relief is vary variable and can last from a few days to several months. Some patients do not experience any pain relief. Hence it is difficult to predict the outcome of the injection treatment in a particular patient.

There may be some discomfort at the injection site for a couple of days after treatment, however, this should settle quite quickly. We advise you to take things easy for the rest of the day. Continue taking your pain medication as advised by your consultant or until you feel benefit from the treatment.

What are the side effects / complications?

Common

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

Rare

- Bleeding
- Infection at the injection site
- Allergic reaction
- New pain
- Worsening pain

Very rare

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

You must tell us if:

- You may be pregnant
- You are taking blood thinning medications - warfarin / clopidogrel
- You have an allergy to medicines, foods or latex
- 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 since you have last seen the consultant
- 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:

RGH on 01633 - 234938

Consultants: Dr. T.M. Ivanova-Stoilova & Dr. S. Wartan

NHH on 01873 - 732373

Consultants: Dr. S. Jeffs and Dr. Joshi