

PATIENT INFORMATION FOR NERVE ROOT INJECTION

Purpose of the Injection

The injection of a nerve root can have a dual purpose; it can be both diagnostic and therapeutic. Firstly, by injecting the local anesthetic around the nerve, the amount of immediate pain relief experienced may help to confirm or rule out the nerve as the source of pain. Secondly, the injection aims to reduce inflammation and / or swelling of the tissues and surround structures that may also reduce your pain. Immediately after your injection, you may feel that your pain has reduced or gone altogether. This is due to the local anesthetic injected around the nerve and may last for several hours. The cortisone that is also injected may take several days to start working and its effect may last several days to months. It is difficult to predict whether the injection will help you or not as occasionally these injections may not provide any significant medium to long term relief.

How is it performed?

Nerve root injections are a common procedure performed by a specialist radiologist. The procedure usually takes about 30 minutes (it may be longer). You will be required to lay very still on your stomach whilst we CT scan the affected area and prepare all the syringes required for the injection. The skin on your back around the affected area will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution and then injected with some local anesthetic. The local anesthetic injection may sting for about 10 seconds as the skin is numbed. Under the guidance of the CT scanner, the needle is positioned adjacent to the desired nerve root as requested by your referring doctor. Once the needle is in the correct position, a mixture of local anesthetic and cortisone will be injected into around the nerve and you may feel some momentary pain in the leg. At the conclusion of the procedure, we will place a band aid over the injection site which you should leave in place for the next 24 hours.

Risks associated with the procedure

Generally, nerve root injections are relatively safe procedures. However, as with any medical interventional procedure there are risks, side effects and the possibility of complications. The most common side effect is pain which is usually temporary. Other risks include but are not limited to; infection, bleeding, numbness or weakness in the leg, accidental damage to nearby structures (e.g. nerve, blood vessel or other organ), allergic reactions to the medications injected and post procedural bruising / soreness. Although extremely rare, injections around the spinal cord carry a very small risk of paralysis or stroke but this is very uncommon. It is strongly advised that you arrange for someone to accompany you home after the injection. Please DO NOT DRIVE YOURSELF HOME.

If you have any questions or concerns about this procedure, please direct any questions to the radiology staff who will attend to you prior to the commencement of the procedure.