

Greater occipital nerve block



Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for patients considering a greater occipital nerve block. The greater occipital nerves travel from your neck up into the back of your head and scalp area. Blocking these nerves may help ease your pain.

What happens if I decide to have an injection?

The injection will be performed in hospital. You will need someone to collect you as you should not drive following this treatment. The procedure itself takes only 10-15 minutes, but you may need to stay a little longer if you feel any side effects of the local anaesthetic.

What does it involve?

It involves an injection of local anaesthetic and sometimes an anti-inflammatory medicine (steroid). This numbs the occipital nerves, which can reduce their activity. This will hopefully reduce headaches, muscle spasm and tension. You will be asked whether you:

- are allergic to anything eg. local anaesthetic, steroids, iodine or plasters
- have any other serious medical conditions
- have been taking antibiotics for an infection
- have been unwell on the day
- are taking any medicines that thin the blood (such as aspirin, warfarin, clopidogrel, rivaroxaban or apixaban).

The doctor will feel around the area on the back of your head, to locate the spot that is suitable for injection. The area of skin is swabbed with alcohol before the injection. A 'sausage' of local anaesthetic is injected under the skin; this is often uncomfortable but does not take long. The area is swabbed afterwards and we will apply a little pressure to the area to reduce any potential bleeding.

What happens afterwards?

You will have a lump on the back of your head where the injection has been, which can last for a day or two. The back of your head will often feel numb, and this can last for a day. This may make you feel a little dizzy or unsteady on your feet.

Following the injection, we will ensure you are feeling OK before we let you go home.

Your pain may improve within the first few hours as an effect of the local anaesthetic. Your pain may return after the local anaesthetic has worn off, and you may feel a bit sore around the site of the injection.

We may give you a pain diary to complete and return to the Pain Clinic. The results in the diary will help inform the consultant/doctor of your response to this injection. If successful, it may be possible to repeat the injection.

Are there any risks or complications?

- The injection may not work – if it does this varies from person to person and may last for a few days up to several months. The effects of the injection are only temporary.
- The risks of steroid medications are included in a separate patient information leaflet.
- Pain may worsen for a week or two after the injection. This normally settles with time.
- Other risks include feeling dizzy and faint during or after the injection. If this happens following the injection we may monitor your blood pressure and keep you within the department to rest.
- Very uncommonly you may have an allergic reaction to the medications used.
- Rare but potentially serious complications include infection or injecting local anaesthetic into a blood vessel by accident (this may cause you to lose consciousness).

When can I resume normal activities?

Once you are home you can continue as normal, so long as you feel well enough. You can drive the following day.

If you feel benefit from the injection you can slowly increase your activity and undertake any specific exercises you may have been given previously. You may also take the opportunity to reduce the amount of pain killers you take.

Will I need any follow up?

You may be given either an appointment to attend a clinic appointment with your consultant/doctor, or offered a telephone review with one of the specialist nurses on behalf of your consultant.

Any questions?

Our contact details for any queries are: 01872 252160 or 252792

Please remember in the first instance your GP is the first point of contact.

If you would like to see this leaflet electronically, click on the QR code below.



If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

