NHS

Royal Cornwall Hospitals

NHS Trust

Genicular nerve block

Information for patients

Outstanding
Care for **One+All**

Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for patients considering a genicular nerve block to help with knee pain. This treatment involves injections to the nerves around the knee and may give temporary or long-lasting relief. However, it may not work for everyone.

A genicular nerve block is often recommended if you:

- have chronic knee pain from osteoarthritis and haven't found relief from a steroid injection
- are not fit enough for knee joint replacement
- need greater mobility to help lose weight before having knee surgery
- have had knee surgery and suffer with post operative pain.

Figure 1 Knee joint showing nerves and injection points

What does it involve?

You will have a diagnostic genicular nerve injection to see if the treatment works for you. This involves injecting a local anaesthetic into the nerves around your knee. Three separate areas are injected. No special preparation is needed.

These injections are usually done as a day case in the Clinical Imaging department. Please bring a list of your current medicines with you.

What happens before the procedure?

The consultant or clinician will discuss the procedure with you and ask you to sign a consent form. As the procedure is usually undertaken with X-ray, please tell us if there is any chance you could be pregnant.

You will also be asked whether you:

- are allergic to anything (such as 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).

What happens during the procedure?

The procedure is quick, taking around 10 minutes.

1. You will lie on your back supported with pillows.
2. The consultant/clinician will clean your skin with an antiseptic spray.
3. They will give you an injection of local anaesthetic to numb the area where you'll receive the nerve block.
4. You may still feel some mild discomfort as the needle enters your skin.
5. The area is swabbed afterwards, and a dressing is applied.
6. You will be monitoring for a short time in recovery to make sure you don't have any unexpected side effects. You will then be able to go home.

What happens afterwards?

You will need someone to drive you home.

You may feel unsteady on your feet and the area of the injection may feel numb. Your pain may improve within hours, but you may feel sore around the site of the injection.

You will be given a pain diary to complete and return to the Pain Clinic. This will help us understand how well the injections have worked. If the diagnostic injection helps, you may be offered a therapeutic procedure called a genicular nerve denervation.

What is genicular nerve denervation?

This is a procedure that aims to change the way pain is transmitted from your nerves to your brain. It involves using heat to interrupt the nerve's pain signals.

The procedure uses an electric current from a special device called a radio frequency machine. You will need to have a grounding plate attached to your body (usually your thigh or abdomen) before we start. The procedure is done in the same way as the diagnostic genicular block, but once the needles are in place heat is produced at the tip of the needle. You may feel some mild discomfort.

This procedure will take longer than the diagnostic block.

You will be given another pain diary to complete and return to the Pain Clinic. We hope that this procedure will offer you longer lasting pain relief.

Are there any risks or side effects?

As with any procedure, there are risks and possible side effects. For genicular nerve injection, there is a risk that it may not work. If it does, pain relief can vary from a few weeks to months.

Possible side effects include:

- increased pain at the injection site for a few weeks
- infection, bruising and bleeding
- rarely, you may have an allergic reaction to the medications used
- temporary numbness in the knee.

Long term side effects are uncommon but include a possibility of:

- sustained increase in pain
- permanent neurological problems such as persisting numbness and weakness.

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 any benefit from the injection, you can slowly increase your activity levels do any specific exercises you may have been given. You may also be able to reduce your pain medications.

Will I need any follow up?

You may have a follow up appointment with your consultant, or a review over the phone with a nurse.

Any questions?

- If you have any questions, contact us on 01872 252160 or 252792.
- Your GP is also your first point of contact.



To get this information in a different format call 01872 252690

Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust
Treliske, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 3LJ.
Switchboard: 01872 250000

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