Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust

The Oxford Pain Management Unit
Churchill Hospital and Horton General Hospital

Suprascapular nerve injection
Information for patients
This information leaflet will help you to understand more about suprascapular nerve injections. If you have any further questions or if there is anything you do not understand, please feel free to ask any of the nurses or your doctor at the Pain Relief Unit.

What is the suprascapular nerve?

The suprascapular nerve is one of a pair of nerves which allow your shoulder joint, shoulder blade and associated muscles to feel sensations, including pain. There is one suprascapular nerve found in each shoulder.

What is a suprascapular nerve injection?

A suprascapular nerve injection is usually an injection of local anaesthetic or a combination of local anaesthetic and steroid into the affected shoulder joint. It is performed by your doctor to try and give you some relief from the pain.
How is the injection given?
This injection is given in the treatment room. Before you go into the treatment room the nurse will take your blood pressure and ask you to change into a gown.

In the treatment room the shoulder that is causing you pain will be uncovered. The doctor will then clean your skin with an antiseptic solution to reduce the risk of infection.

What happens first?
Before the injection the nurse will ask you:

• if you are allergic to anything, e.g. local anaesthetic, steroids, iodine or sticking plasters
• if you are taking or have recently taken antibiotics for an infection
• if you are taking any medicines to thin your blood such as warfarin, aspirin, Ticlopidine, Sinthrone or Clopidogrel
• if you feel unwell on the day
• if you have any other serious medical conditions.

What will I feel during the procedure?
You may feel the needle going through your skin and some pressure when the medicine is injected. In most cases the local anaesthetic will numb the area and give some immediate relief.

The doctor may ask you to tell him/her if you think the injection is going into the right spot where your pain is coming from.
How long will it take?
This varies from person to person but it usually takes about 10-15 minutes for the whole procedure.

What happens afterwards?
After the injection the nurse will apply a dressing and then help you into a wheelchair. The nurse will then take you to the recovery room where we advise you to rest for at least 30 minutes. Some people might need to lie down for a short while. You will be offered a drink before you go home.

You must not drive after the injection so you will need to arrange for someone to drive you home.

What will happen to my pain?
Usually your pain will improve in the first few hours after the injection of local anaesthetic. Your pain may return after the anaesthetic has worn off and there may be some additional soreness as a result of the injection.

The steroid can take up to two weeks to work or it may not work at all. If it does work, the effects can last for several weeks or months. Each person responds differently to the injections and the effect will not be known until you have had the injection.
What are the risks and side effects?

Injections using steroids are not usually given more than three times a year in order to avoid potential side effects which can occur when using steroids. These include:

- an increased risk of infection at the injection site
- raised blood sugars in people with diabetes
- an increased appetite and possible weight gain
- dimpling of the skin at the site of the injection.

There are some risks that do need to be mentioned but they do not happen very often. These include:

- feeling dizzy
- bleeding
- an increase in pain
- an allergic reaction to the medicine.

What happens next?

You will be sent an appointment for one of the nursing staff to phone you in 2-3 months time. They will phone to find out how effective the injection has been. It is useful to make a note of when the pain starts to return as this is a question the nurse will ask you when she/he contacts you.
Do I need to rest when I get home?

On the day of treatment you may want to rest when you get home or you can continue as normal if you feel well enough. You should be able to drive the following day. If your pain improves then you should slowly build up your activity and exercise. However, pain is best managed by keeping active within your own limits.

How do I get advice once I get home?

If you have any non-urgent questions please feel free to leave a message on the Pain Team’s voicemail advice line or send a message to their email address.

**Pain Relief Unit – Nurse Advice**

Voicemail: **01865 857 107**

or

Email: **painreliefteam.ouh@nhs.net**

**Please note:**

For appointment queries contact **01865 57 2079**

If you have any urgent problems, please contact your GP.
If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221473 or email PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk