



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Diagnostic Nerve Blocks for Spasticity

Information for patients



Who is this leaflet for?

You have been given this leaflet as you may undergo diagnostic nerve blocks to nerves in limb/s affected by spasticity.

What are diagnostic nerve blocks?

A diagnostic nerve block involves injection of local anaesthetic to temporarily block nerves that control certain muscle groups. Specific nerves or nerve branches are targeted that are felt to be contributing to your spasticity.

What is spasticity?

Spasticity can happen after the brain or the nerves in your spine are damaged. Your muscles can tighten when you do not need them to and become stiff. This is spasticity. Sometimes this stiffness in a muscle can help a person to do something. If it is normally difficult for a person to stand up, spasticity can make their legs feel stronger. But it can sometimes lead to problems such as pain or difficulties with daily tasks. If spasticity carries on for a long time, it can reduce the amount a muscle is able to move.

What are the aims of diagnostic nerve blocks?

Diagnostic nerve blocks are used to assess your muscle tightness in more detail. This can help guide the team on how best to manage it. You will be clinically examined before and after the procedure so that we can see the effect of the nerve block. If the cause of your tightness is mainly spasticity, we would expect a significant change in tightness after the nerve block. If the cause of your tightness is mainly muscle shortening or contracture, there is usually minimal or no difference after the nerve block. This information will help the team decide on the most appropriate treatment for you, which may include physical management, medication advice, botulinum toxin injections, cryoneurolysis or surgery.

How long do the effects last?

A diagnostic nerve block is an assessment and not a treatment; the effect will wear off entirely in a few hours.

How will it be given?

The procedure requires a trained clinician to inject local anaesthetic around the targeted nerve through your skin. We use an ultrasound and nerve stimulator to guide our needle.

Are there side effects from the nerve block?

Side effects from the procedure include;

- allergy and anaphylaxis to the local anaesthetic medication
- bleeding, bruising and infection at the site of injection
- damage to the surrounding structures (nerve and/or blood vessel)
- tingling /numbness of the area.

Serious side effects, caused by systemic toxicity are extremely rare and are usually the result of the medication being accidentally given into the bloodstream.

Blood thinning medicine

If you are taking warfarin, your INR needs to be in the therapeutic range (usually 2.5 to 3.5). Please make sure you have your INR checked no longer than one week before the appointment by contacting your GP surgery. You should bring the result to your clinic appointment.

If you are taking any other blood thinning medicine, for example rivaroxaban, apixaban or dabigatran, please do not stop using these.

Is there anything I should look out for when I go home?

Please get in contact with the clinical team if you are experiencing pain that does not go away.

Contact details

For more information and advice during working hours (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm).

Spasticity Team

Telephone: **01865 737 451**

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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