

# Coeliac plexus block with local anaesthetic

An information guide



# **Coeliac plexus block with local anaesthetic**

If you are on blood thinning medications such as Warfarin, Nicoumalone (Sinthrome), Aspirin, Clopidogrel (Plavix), Ticlopidine (Ticlid) then please contact the Booking and Scheduling Department on 0161 778 2288.

## **What is a coeliac plexus block?**

It is an injection of local anaesthetic (medication that numbs the nerves) in and around the coeliac plexus.

The coeliac plexus is a collection of sympathetic nerves that controls the function of the internal organs. These nerves can become involved in painful conditions such as pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas) or in cancer of the internal organs (pancreas, stomach, liver, gall bladder, kidneys and ureters).

## **Why is the injection given?**

The injection helps to control some of the pain in the abdomen or the pain radiating to the back caused by cancer or by inflammation of the internal organs.

The injection is also done to test and treat if the pain is due to the sympathetic nerves.

## **How is the injection done?**

You will be asked to come to the Day Surgery Unit.

A cannula (plastic tube) will be placed at the back of your hand. The procedure is done under local anaesthetic (medication to numb the skin). In some circumstances sedation (medication to relax) and other medication such as pain killers can be given through the cannula.

You will be asked to lie on your front. The injection is given on either side of your back, 7-8 cms from the middle of your back. The correct site for the coeliac plexus block injection is checked with the help of an x-ray machine and marked on the skin on both sides.

Local anaesthetic solution is injected to numb the skin and the needle is directed to the correct place. After further confirmation of the correct site by the injection of a dye, the local anaesthetic medication that acts on the sympathetic nerves is given.

## **What are the beneficial effects?**

Blocking the sympathetic nerves can reduce the severity of pain. The pain relief may take days or weeks to take effect.

In some groups of patients the block helps by reducing the number of painkillers that are required to control the pain. The block acts as an additional method of pain control.

## **What are the side effects?**

As with any procedure there are risks and possible complications.

The most common side effect is some pain at the injection site on your back. You may develop a tendency to feel dizzy or faint when you stand up quickly. This effect is expected and is due to the action of the medication on the blood pressure.

The low blood pressure can easily be corrected by giving you some fluids (drip) through the plastic tube in the back of your hand. Some patients develop diarrhoea, due to the action of the block on the nerves that control bowel functions.

Occasionally you may feel a little breathless or have shoulder pain or have difficulty in passing urine.

## **Rare potential side effects**

Very rarely the nerves that are involved with movement may be affected, causing weakness or paralysis of the legs. Bleeding, infection and injection into blood vessels and adjacent areas are other extremely rare effects, which may require specific treatments. The use of the x-ray machine greatly reduces the risk of serious complications.

## **Advice/precaution**

- You will be required to stay in hospital overnight after the procedure
- If you develop fainting or dizzy spells, you should be careful not to sit up or stand up quickly and walk too soon
- A follow-up appointment will be arranged, so that the doctor/nurse can review the effects of the injection
- You should carry on with your normal activities and aim to reduce your painkillers if the effect of the injection appears to have been successful
- If there are any concerns or queries please contact the pain clinic.

**It is very important that you inform the doctor/secretary in the pain clinic at least one week before the injection if:**

- You are allergic to any medications
- You have an infection near the injection site
- You think you might be pregnant
- Caution should be exercised if you have had a recent heart attack or vaccination.

## **Contact Details:**

### **Oldham**

Day Surgery 0161 627 8212

Pain Secretary 0161 656 1211

### **Fairfield**

Day Surgery 0161 778 2503

Pain Secretary 0161 778 3622

### **Rochdale**

Day Surgery 01706 517132/517133

Pain Secretary 01706 517705

### **NMGH**

Day Surgery 0161 720 2240

Pain Secretary 0161 720 2520



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**For general enquiries please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0161 604 5897**


**For enquiries regarding clinic appointments, clinical care and treatment please contact 0161 624 0420 and the Switchboard Operator will put you through to the correct department / service**

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