

Information for adult patients undergoing

Coeliac plexus block for the Treatment of Pain

The aim of this leaflet is to give you information about coeliac plexus blocks and to answer some questions that you may have. Please note that places may do things differently. Your doctor will be able to explain fully what to expect.

What is a coeliac plexus block?

A coeliac plexus block is an injection used to treat certain types of abdominal pain, often pain that has been difficult to treat in other ways. Your doctor can give you more information about the injection and what is to be injected. The injection may be made with local anaesthetic. Usually, it is used for cancer pain, using either phenol or alcohol to destroy nerves in the coeliac plexus.

It is important to think about the potential benefits and the risks to make sure that this is the right treatment for you.

Is this the right treatment for me?

Other treatment options will be discussed with you before deciding to go ahead with the injection and your consent is needed. The decision on whether or not to have the injection is made together by you and your doctor. Your doctor will be able to give you up-to-date information about the chance of the treatment working for you.

If you are undecided about whether or not to have an injection then more advice and information can be given. Please speak to your doctor for more information.

If your health has changed, it is important to let your doctor know.

Coeliac Plexus Block for the Treatment of Pain

- ▶ If you have an infection in your body or on the skin of your back your doctor will wait until the infection is cleared before you have the treatment
- ▶ If you have been started on anticoagulant or antiplatelet medicines that “thin the blood” such as warfarin, heparin, apixaban, rivaroxaban or clopidogrel, extra preparation before the treatment may be needed.
- ▶ If you have any allergies

You must also tell the doctor if there is any chance that you could be pregnant.

Finally, if you are planning to travel abroad or fly within 5 to 7 days after the injection, please let your doctor know as it may be best to change the date of the injection.

What will happen to me during the treatment?

Before the injection, your doctor will discuss the procedure with you. Your doctor will either ask for your consent or ask you to confirm that you have already given consent and are still happy to have the injection. The treatment will take place in a dedicated area with a trained person. An X-ray machine (or other forms of image guidance) will be used to make sure the injection is accurate.

Not all doctors do these injections in exactly the same way, but this is what usually happens:

- ▶ A medical professional will get you ready for the procedure.
- ▶ Your blood pressure and pulse rate may be checked.
- ▶ A small needle (cannula) will be placed in the back of your hand.
- ▶ You will be carefully positioned and the skin around the injection site(s) will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution or spray; this can feel very cold.
- ▶ X-ray (or an alternative way of guiding the needles) will be used.
- ▶ You may feel a stinging sensation as local anaesthetic is injected to numb the skin and surrounding area. Your doctor will warn you of this first.
- ▶ There are different ways of doing this procedure and your doctor will give you information about whether this is one or more injections, or given from the front or back. The doctor will direct the needle to the correct position and check this often by using contrast solution (this shows up under X-ray).
- ▶ When the injections are made, you may feel pain, pressure, tightness or a pushing sensation. If it is uncomfortable, do let the doctor know.

What will happen to me after the injections?

After the injection you will be taken to a recovery or ward area where nursing staff will check on you. Sometimes you will be asked to lie flat for about 30 minutes or longer. You may be helped to sit up and your blood pressure and pulse will be checked. You will be told when to get dressed and be given help to make sure you can stand safely after the procedure.

Your pain will be checked at rest and during usual daily activities to find out how much pain relief the injection has given you.

When will I be able to go home from hospital after my injections?

You will usually be able to go home within a few hours after the injection and in some cases much sooner, depending on how long your doctor or nurse want you to stay. Please make sure that you have someone to collect you after the procedure. It is unsafe for you to drive home straight after the procedure. If you do so your motor insurance will be invalid.

What can I do after my procedure?

Ideally, you should arrange for someone to stay with you for 24 hours but, if you can't, you should at least have access to a telephone. You should not drive, operate machinery, sign legal documents, provide childcare without help or drink alcohol until fit to do so.

If you are not sure, please ask your doctor for more advice.

When can I return to work after the procedure?

This will be different for different people and may depend on the type of work you do. It is difficult to give general advice and so you should discuss this with your doctor.

Will I experience any side-effects?

As with any procedure, there may be side-effects. These are usually minor but there can be major risks with this procedure and some side-effects may be permanent.

Side-effects may include:

- ▶ Mild local tenderness and / or bruising at the site of the injection. This usually gets better over the first few days, but sometimes people experience back pain for longer.
- ▶ Blood pressure may become low after a coeliac plexus block. The nurse will check regularly before you go home. Care will be taken after you first stand up and walk after the procedure. You may need to have a drip inserted and be given fluids to help get your blood pressure back to normal. You may be asked to wear special compression stockings (TED stockings).
- ▶ The digestive system may be affected by the procedure. If you have problems with sickness this will usually get better. You may notice your bowel movements are looser than usual, even diarrhoea. Please let your doctor know if this is a problem. It is important that you do not get dehydrated after the procedure.
- ▶ Rarely, local anaesthetic may spread to other parts of your body, causing some numbness and/or weakness in your legs and other areas. If this happens, the effect is temporary and will quickly get better over minutes or hours.
- ▶ Injection treatments do not always work and may not help your pain.

Coeliac Plexus Block for the Treatment of Pain

- ▶ Infection. This is rare. You should seek medical help if there is local warmth or redness where you had your injection with pain. Or if you feel hot and unwell. This may require antibiotic treatment.
- ▶ Intravascular injection. Very rarely, unplanned injection of local anaesthetic may lead to collapse and need medical treatment.
- ▶ Difficulty with sexual function (Males only). Your doctor can explain.
- ▶ Paralysis is a rare complication. Your doctor will discuss this fully with you.
- ▶ Internal organ puncture and damage.
- ▶ Bleeding from major blood vessel puncture.



People vary in how they interpret words and numbers.
This scale is provided to help.



What can I expect in the days afterwards?

You may have some soreness or aching at the injection site. Please keep the area of the injection dry for 24 hours following the procedure. Do not worry if your pain feels worse for a few days as this sometimes happens. Your doctor will tell you about the use of regular pain killers after this injection.

What should I do in the weeks after the injections?

As your pain decreases, you should try to gently increase your exercise. Simple activities like a daily walk, using an exercise bike or swimming on your back will help. Your doctor will be able to give you more specific advice. It is best to increase your activities slowly. Try not to do too much as you may have more pain the next day.

What follow-up will be arranged?

A letter will usually be sent to your GP and your doctor will tell you what to do after the procedure. You may be asked to make a call to the pain department, be given a form to fill in, or given a telephone review or other appointment.

Is there anything else I need to think about before the procedure?

- ▶ Please bring your glasses if you need them for reading.
- ▶ Bring any other devices you may need, such as hearing aids, mobility aids etc.
- ▶ Always bring a list of all current medication.
- ▶ Continue to take your medication as usual on the treatment day unless advised otherwise.
- ▶ Avoid vaccinations including COVID-19 jabs for 2 weeks on either side of the procedure

Finally...

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's or health care team's advice. If you need more information or have any questions or concerns please speak to your GP or contact your Pain Clinic.

Name	
Pain Service	
Address	
Contact Numbers	

Updated Sept 2022 to be reviewed in Sept 2025

S.Kanakarajan and G. Baranidharan Professional Standards Committee of the Faculty of Pain Medicine.

Acknowledgements:

Members of the Professional Standards Committee.