

Lumbar Nerve Root Injection

Information for patients

What is a lumbar nerve root injection?

A lumbar nerve root injection is a procedure to help **find the cause of your leg pain** and to **reduce inflammation** around an irritated nerve in your lower back. The purpose of the injection is to help with any leg pain you are suffering.

A clinician will use a **CT scanner** to guide a very thin needle to the correct spot.

Why might I need this injection?

This injection can help in two ways:

1. To find the cause of your pain

If your symptoms improve after the injection, it may suggest that the area we treated is involved in your pain, and this information can help your clinicians plan any possible future treatment, such as surgery.

2. To help treat the pain in your leg

The injection contains:

- **Local anaesthetic** – numbs the nerve for a short time
- **Steroid medicine** – reduces inflammation and can give longer-lasting relief (usually starts working within 7–10 days).

How likely is it to help?

About **75% of people (3 out of 4)** feel some improvement after this injection.

It works best for people who have had severe pain for **less than 6 months**, after that it can be less effective, but some still have a good result.

Are there any risks?

Most people have the injection without problems, but risks include:

- **Infection** (1 in 20)
- **Bruising or bleeding** (1 in 10)
- **Allergic reaction** to the medicines
- **Technical difficulties** (for example, if lying on your front is too painful or if the needle can't be placed safely)
- **No improvement in pain**, even if the procedure goes well
- **Very rare but serious risk:** damage to nerves or blood vessels that may cause bladder or bowel problems (temporary or permanent) or paralysis.

IMPORTANT - If you take **blood thinning medicines (anticoagulants)**, please tell the team in advance by contacting the number on your appointment letter as soon as possible.

Are there alternatives?

Yes. These include:

- Time and natural healing
- Pain relief medicines
- Physiotherapy and exercise.

Your Appointment

How will I hear about my appointment?

You will get a **text message** or a **letter**.

Sometimes, you may receive a **phone call** if there is a short notice space.

- You will receive a phone call the week before your appointment to ensure you can still attend and will be asked questions (i.e. current medications etc.) to ensure you are still suitable for the injection.

Will I be awake?

Yes, you will be awake the whole time. We do not use sedation or general anaesthetic for this procedure.

Does it hurt?

You may feel some discomfort, especially because the area is already sore. Most people find the procedure manageable.

After the Injection

Can I drive or lift things?

- **No driving for 24 hours**
- Avoid heavy lifting for **24 hours**
- After that, return to normal activities gradually as your pain allows (moving gently is good for your back).

IMPORTANT - You must not drive on the day of the procedure.
You will need to arrange suitable transport to and from the

When will I feel better?

- The **numbing medicine** may help for a few hours
- The **steroid** usually begins to work after **7–10 days**.

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