

Pain management centre

# Injection/interventional therapy

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet explains what will happen at your injection/interventional therapy appointment. If you have any further questions please feel free to call us on 020 3311 7134 / 7016.

### Preparing for your appointment

It is important that you do not eat anything for six hours before your appointment. You are allowed to drink clear fluids such as water up to two hours beforehand. Milk is not allowed.

If you have a morning appointment, you need to fast from midnight. If you have an afternoon appointment you can have a light breakfast at 07.00 at the very latest then must fast after that.

You will not be able to have an injection on the day if you:

- are acutely unwell (needing active treatment)
- are pregnant or think you might be
- are on medication to thin the blood (or prevent it clotting) such as warfarin or clopidogrel
- have not arranged for a responsible adult to collect you after the procedure as you cannot drive

### What will happen at my appointment?

Please arrive at least 15 minutes before your appointment time so you can get changed and have your vital signs, such as your blood pressure, checked. If you are late we may have to reschedule your appointment.

Please note that although you have a set time for your procedure you will not necessarily have the injection at that time. For example, the clinic may be running late or we may have to deal with an emergency. Thank you in advance for your patience.

Firstly, the doctor will assess you, discuss the injections with you and ask for your consent to give you the injections. Then you will go through to the operating room where there will be a nurse, a radiographer (operating the x-ray machine) and the doctor performing the injections. Please note that as we are a teaching hospital, sometimes an experienced doctor (a fellow) who is still undergoing higher specialist training will perform the injections.

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Before they give the injections, they will apply a local anaesthetic to the surface of your skin to numb the area and minimise discomfort. We do not routinely give sedation for injections in the pain clinic (and definitely not a general anaesthetic).

Next, you will lie face down, flat on your stomach or on your side. You will need to lie still in this position for over half an hour as we carry out the injections. You may experience some discomfort as the injections are given due to the fact they're being given in a part of the body that is already painful. However, the local anaesthetic helps and most people tolerate the procedure well.

Staff will talk to you as the injections are being given and sometimes we play music to help people relax. The doctors and nurses will make the experience as comfortable for you as possible.

Some patients will require multiple injections and so the procedure may last longer.

### Are there any risks involved in having the injections?

The injections are generally safe and the main risks are that they either do not work or that they temporarily increase the pain due to local inflammation, which usually settles in a day or so. There is a small risk of bleeding, bruising, infection or allergic reaction to the drugs injected. There is also a risk of nerve damage with any injection or operation.

The risk of serious nerve damage, such as paralysis, from a spinal injection is very small and thought to be somewhere in the region of 1 in 250,000.

It is extremely unlikely that any injection would result in permanent harm or any scar tissue of significance (as may be the case with major surgery).

### What are the benefits of having the injections?

Many patients experience prolonged benefit from injection therapies for months or even a year afterwards. Unfortunately, some people experience no significant benefit at all or experience a partial, short-lived improvement. In these cases, it may be appropriate to try alternative injections. It is not possible to accurately predict the response in advance.

### What happens after the procedure?

After your procedure we will monitor you in the recovery room for at least half an hour. You must be collected by a responsible adult and must not drive or operate machinery that day. You should rest for 24 hours afterwards and keep the injected area completely dry for the same period to promote rapid healing.

We recommend that you make detailed, written notes of your symptoms before and after the procedure in order to assess its impact. This also allows the doctor to determine the best next steps for you.

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We strongly recommend that you carry out daily gentle exercises as recommended by a good physiotherapist. Exercises are usually the best way to minimise pain and maximise function in the long-term.

## Will I need a follow-up appointment?

We recommend that you make a routine appointment to see your GP approximately six weeks after the procedure to review how you are getting on and your medications, which may need to be increased or decreased. We will arrange for follow-up in the pain clinic as appropriate.

There are limitations to the treatments available for chronic pain and so we monitor the development of potential new therapies. Occasionally, we may consider offering unusual or new therapies on a research basis. This is just one way of discovering new ways of helping people with chronic pain and this is how the benefits of percutaneous electrical nerve stimulation therapy were discovered. We will never offer you dangerous or pointless experimental therapy.

## What if I cannot make my appointment?

Please give as much notice as you can if you cannot attend your appointment so that we can give the slot to another patient.

If you are running late on the day of your appointment please call us on the number below.

## Contact details

The pain management centre is based at Charing Cross Hospital but also covers St Mary's and Hammersmith hospitals:

Pain management centre, second floor, Charing Cross Hospital, Fulham Palace Road, London W6 8RF

Clinic hours: 08.30-17.00

Telephone: 020 3311 7134 / 7016

Visit our website to find out how to travel to Charing Cross Hospital:

[www.imperial.nhs.uk/charingcross/location/](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk/charingcross/location/)

## Further resources

The following website has detailed information about the type of injections that we offer including epidural steroid injections and injections into the facet joints and sacroiliac joints.

[www.spine-health.com/treatment/injections](http://www.spine-health.com/treatment/injections)

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## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
[imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)