



# Rectus Sheath Blocks

For Pain Management

## Patient information Leaflet

September 2018

## **WHAT IS A RECTUS SHEATH BLOCK?**

Rectus sheath blocks are often used for chronic abdominal pain, but can also be used for acute abdominal pain relief especially after surgery. The aim of the technique is to block the terminal branches of the lower six thoracic nerves which run between the internal oblique and transversus abdominis muscle. The block provides somatic pain relief for abdominal wall structures superficial to the peritoneum.

## **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?**

The injection of local anaesthetic and steroid may provide temporary relief from pain but you should follow a regular gentle course of daily exercises, otherwise the pain may return.

## **WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS/COMPLICATIONS OF THE PROCEDURE?**

Complications are rare, however possible complications include:

- Bruising
- Infection
- Blood clots
- Nerve injury
- Allergic reaction to any of the medicines used in the procedure.
- Steroid injections may produce local reactions occurring usually immediately after the procedure. These tend to last 24-48 hours.
- Post procedural pain flare up may occasionally occur and can be treated with pain killers.
- Neurological complications including numbness can happen, although are very rare.
- Bowel perforation has been reported following rectus sheath block however this procedure will be performed under ultrasound guidance which helps to minimize this complication.

## **ARE THERE ANY ALTERNATIVES?**

By the time that you consider having a rectus sheath block you should have already tried other more simple treatments. These include a graduated pain free exercise program, painkilling and anti-inflammatory tablets, physiotherapy and TENS.

## **POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS OF USING STEROIDS?**

There are minimal side effects associated with either single or occasional use of steroids. These include hot flushes, feeling sick, mild abdominal pain, fluid retention, raised blood sugars in diabetics and occasionally menstrual irregularities. These should settle in a few days.

- If you take water tablets (Diuretics) on a regular basis then please take an extra water table the next day.
- If you are diabetic you should closely observe your diabetic control for the next fortnight.

Repeated and frequent use of steroids has the potential to lead to more serious effects but the doses of steroids given in the injections are minimal compared with the doses of steroids taken by mouth on regular basis.

## **PRIOR TO ADMISSION:**

**You must inform the Non Acute Pain Team at least 1 week prior to your procedure on 0161 922 6759:**

1. If you are allergic to local anaesthetic or steroid medication.
2. If you are or think you may be pregnant.
3. If you have an infection near the site of the injection or elsewhere.
4. If you are taking antibiotics or drugs used to treat other infections e.g. Tamiflu or have finished a course within the three weeks prior to your procedure date.
5. If you are taking blood thinning drugs such as: Warfarin, Synthrome, Aspirin, Clopidogrel, Ticlopidinem, or any of the new anticoagulants, as it may be necessary to stop taking these medications prior to your procedure.
6. If you are experiencing any difficulty or frequency in passing urine.
7. If you have had a vaccination (including the Flu Vaccine)
8. If you have had a heart attack within the last twelve months.
9. If you have undergone surgery or had **any illness** within the last four weeks.
10. If you do not have anyone to collect you and stay with you for 24 hours following discharge on the day of your procedure.
11. If you have taken any medicines recently for Migraine/Headaches.

Please **do not drive** yourself to the hospital as you will not be able to drive home following your procedure. You **must** arrange for a responsible adult to collect you and take you home by car or taxi, and they must be able to stay with you overnight. If this is not possible your procedure may have to be postponed.

## **HOW LONG WILL I BE IN HOSPITAL FOR?**

The procedure is performed as a day-case, the time detailed on your appointment letter relates to your admission time, your procedure will be carried out later that morning/afternoon. **Please be prepared to stay approximately half a day**, although you should bring your dressing gown, slippers and current medication with you in the event that you are required to stay in hospital overnight.

## **ON THE DAY OF YOUR PROCEDURE**

### **Before Admission**

Please ensure that you do not have anything to eat for 6 hours prior to the procedure and drink only clear fluids up to two hours before you are admitted.

If you are diabetic you may eat and drink normally. Please take your usual diabetic medication.

If you have been told by the doctor that you will be receiving sedation during your procedure, you should not eat or drink anything for 6 hours beforehand. Please contact the pain nurse if required for advice.

Unless you have contacted the pain nurse and been advised to stop any medicines (e.g. blood thinning drugs or ACE Inhibitors), please take your usual medication on the day of admission, with a small amount of water. You should also bring your medications with you.

**If you are unwell on the day of your procedure please contact:  
The Non Acute Pain Secretary on 0161-922-6816/The Day case unit on: 0161-922-6219**

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME BEFORE THE PROCEDURE?**

On arrival to the unit, you will be asked to complete a pre-admission questionnaire, before being admitted by a nurse. During your admission the nurse will discuss the information provided in the questionnaire and record your pulse, blood pressure, respiratory rate, temperature and oxygen saturation (amount of oxygen in your blood), you may also be asked to provide a urine sample. If the information provided highlights a cause for concern or your observations are abnormal your procedure may be **cancelled** pending further investigation and treatment.

Following admission you will be asked to return to the waiting area until your procedure time. Once you are called the doctor will explain the procedure to you, and give you the opportunity to ask any questions. If you agree to have the procedure you will be asked to sign a consent form and may be required to put on a gown. If you have been told you are having sedation you would need an IV cannula inserted before the start of the procedure.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME DURING THE PROCEDURE?**

Once inside the operation theatre you will be asked to sit or lie in a comfortable position suited for the procedure. After the skin is cleaned with an anti-septic solution, A small amount of local anaesthetic is injected into the skin overlying the injection site in order to numb the skin. The treatment agents, i.e. a mixture of Steroid & Local anaesthetic is then administered. You may feel some discomfort during the injection, but normally settles quickly. This procedure is mostly performed under ultrasound guidance.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME AFTER THE PROCEDURE?**

Immediately after the procedure you may feel that the area which has been injected with the anaesthetic solution feels numb and heavy. This is to be expected and should settle within a few hours, however occasionally you may experience prolonged weakness or numbness which will require you to stay in hospital overnight. It is therefore advisable to seek assistance from the nursing staff when first standing or walking.

Following your procedure you will be monitored for a short period of time, and if all observations are within normal range, you are able to pass water and mobilise safely, you will be discharged home. You may have a dressing over the injection site; this can be removed after twenty four hours. Please ensure that you follow the instructions you are given about rest, exercise and how long to stay off work.

## **DISCHARGE ARRANGEMENTS**

It is important that someone is able to collect you, and you do not attempt to drive yourself home. If you do not have anyone to escort you home, then you must discuss this with the pain team before the day of your procedure or your procedure will be **cancelled**.

## **ONCE AT HOME**

On the day of the procedure you should rest for a couple of hours before resuming your normal activities. It is important that you monitor the effect of the injection on your pain over the next couple of weeks as this will assist doctors in planning further treatment. Most people find that the pain is reduced within a few days after the Block. Try to increase your exercises moderately if the effects of your injection appear to be successful. However it is important when doing your exercises that you do not go into the pain, you must stop before pain is felt.

**If you have been given sedation it is important that in the following twenty four hours:**

- You **Do Not** drive as your insurance will not cover you.
- You **Do Not** operate machinery (including cooking and using other domestic appliances).
- You **Do Not** drink alcohol.
- You **Do Not** make important decisions.
- You are **Not** left alone in the house to look after small children

Following your procedure an out patients' appointment will be arranged in order for you to evaluate the effectiveness of treatment and discuss further management with the Non Acute Pain Team.

## **IF THERE IS A PROBLEM?**

If you have any concerns about anything relating to the appointment date or time please contact the Non Acute Pain Secretary.

If you have any concerns relating to your procedure please contact the pain nurse.

### **Contact Numbers**

**The Non Acute Pain Secretary can be contacted:**

Mon-Fri 9am-5pm on 0161-922-6816

**The Non Acute Pain Nurse can be contacted on:**

Monday-Friday 8am-3pm on 0161-922-6279/6759

N.B. Outside these hours leave a message and the secretary or the nurse will get back to you. However if the matter is urgent please contact your GP, NHS 111 or attend your local accident and emergency department.

## **OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION**

NHS 111

The Trusts Patient Information Centre 0161 922 5332

British Pain Society 020 7269 7840 / [www.britishpainsociety.org/home](http://www.britishpainsociety.org/home)

If you have any questions you want to ask, you can use this space below to remind you

If you have a visual impairment this leaflet can be made available in bigger print or on audiotape. If you require either of these options please contact the Patient Information Centre on 0161 922 5332

آپنی یہی اہی تہا پڑتے ہا بڑھتے نا پائےن، تاہلے انورھ کرے ا تہنک ہلہہ ڈیمےر ساہے ڈےسکفونے یوگا یوگا کرن 0161 331 5149/5150 اہی ناہارے، تہن تارا آپناکے ساہیا کرتے پارہے۔

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0161 331 5149/5150 پر رابطہ کریں تو وہ آپ کی مدد کر سکیں گے۔

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