



**FACULTY OF  
PAIN MEDICINE**  
of the Royal College of Anaesthetists

**Information sheet for adult patients undergoing:**

# **Intravenous Regional Analgesia**

**for the Treatment of Pain**

## **What is the aim of this information sheet?**

The aim of this information sheet is to provide you with information relating to Intravenous Regional Analgesia and to answer some questions that you may have. Please note that practice may vary. Your doctor will be able to explain fully what to expect.

## **What is intravenous regional analgesia?**

Intravenous Regional Analgesia is a technique where medicine, usually a local anaesthetic, however other medicines can be used, is injected intravenously into a limb to treat some pain conditions. The medicine is contained within the limb for a short period using a tourniquet. The anesthetic then numbs the limb. The procedure may be undertaken alongside other treatments such as physiotherapy to the affected limb.

## Is this the right treatment for me?

Other treatment options will be discussed with you before deciding to go ahead with the injections and your consent is needed. The decision on whether or not to go ahead with the injection(s) is a shared decision between you and your doctor. Your doctor will be able to provide you with up-to-date information about the likelihood of this being a successful treatment for you and how this treatment fits into the best pathway of care. If you are undecided about whether or not to have injections then further advice and information to make this informed decision can be provided. Please speak to your doctor for more information.

If your health has changed, it is important to let your doctor know; including if you have any allergies.

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

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

## What will happen to me during the treatment?

Before the injection, your doctor will discuss the procedure with you. Your doctor will either obtain your consent before the injection or confirm this consent if it was previously given. The treatment will take place in a dedicated area with trained personnel. Not all doctors undertake these injections in exactly the same way but the following usually happens;

- You will be prepared for the procedure as per local protocol
- Observations such as blood pressure and pulse rate may be made
- Your doctor will insert two needles into your veins, one will be used to give local anaesthetic into your painful arm or leg and the second cannula for safety reasons, in case other medications need to be administered
- The painful limb will be protected with soft padding and a cuff, similar to a blood pressure cuff, applied. This will be inflated while you raise your limb and can be painful, please let your doctor know if this is the case
- The doctor will then inject the local anaesthetic and possibly other medicines through the needle on the side of your painful limb. The blood circulation is restricted because of the inflated cuff so the drug stays in the affected arm or leg
- After a set period of time, usually around twenty minutes, the air is let out of the cuff. You may feel intense heat and pins and needles in your arm/leg, but this along with any giddiness will wear off quickly
- After about thirty minutes you may be offered light refreshment and also encouraged to move the limb

## What will happen to me after the injections?

After the injections you will be taken to a recovery or ward area where nursing staff will observe you. Sometimes you will be asked to lay flat for about 30 minutes or longer. You may be assisted to sit up and your blood pressure and pulse may be checked. You will be advised when to get dressed and be given assistance to help to ensure that you can stand safely after the procedure. You will be given further advice when you are ready to go home.

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

You will usually be able to return 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 for recovery. Please ensure that you have made arrangements for someone to collect you after the procedure. Failure to do so will likely result in your procedure being cancelled. It is unsafe for you to drive home immediately 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, failing that, you should at least have access to a telephone. You should not drive, operate machinery, sign legal documents, provide childcare unsupervised or drink alcohol until fit to do so.

If in doubt, please discuss these issues with your doctor for further advice.

## When can I return to work after the procedure?

This will vary between individuals and may depend on the nature of your work. 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, side-effects may occur. However, these are usually minor and there is little risk of serious harm.

Side-effects may include;

- Mild local tenderness and/or bruising at the site of the injection, that usually settles over the first few days
- The arm and leg may feel numb and weak. This is usually temporary and resolves
- You may feel giddy or faint briefly when the cuff is deflated or occasionally have a headache
- Applying a tourniquet to an arm may very rarely cause further nerve injury
- Serious harm such as from a serious reaction to injected medicine is a very rare possibility
- Injection treatments are not always effective and may not help your pain

## What can I expect in the days afterwards?

You may experience some soreness or aching at the injection site. Please keep the area of the injections dry for 24 hours following the procedure. Do not worry if your pain feels worse for a few days as this sometimes happens. Take your regular pain killers and medications as normal and this should settle down. Try to keep on the move about the house whilst avoiding anything too strenuous.

## What should I do in the weeks after the injections?

As your pain decreases, you should try to gently increase your exercise. Simple activities improve your muscle tone. It is best to increase your activities slowly. Try not to overdo things on a good day so that you end up paying for it with more pain the following day. Your doctor will be able to provide more specific advice.

## What follow-up will be arranged?

Though practice may vary, a letter will usually be sent to your GP and your doctor will advise on 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 consider before the procedure?

- Please bring your glasses if you need them for reading
- Always bring a list of all current medication
- Continue to take your medication as usual on the treatment day

## Finally...

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

Name:	
Pain Service:	
Address:	
Contact numbers:	

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