

Lumbar sympathetic block

Introduction

You will soon be coming to Amstelland Hospital for a lumbar sympathetic block. This leaflet provides additional information on this treatment. Be aware that your personal situation may differ from the one described in this leaflet.

What is a lumbar sympathetic block?

A lumbar sympathetic block is a treatment in which a pathway of the involuntary nervous system is blocked by one or more needles. The goal of the treatment is to reduce pain. The treatment is used for circulatory disorders in the leg, sympathetic reflex dystrophy/CRPS, lower back pain and certain nerve pains, such as phantom pain.

Important to note

Always contact (before your next treatment) the Pain Medicine Department if one of the following applies to you and you have not yet discussed this with the pain specialist. The following information may be important for your treatment:

- Use of blood-thinning medication
The pain specialist will discuss with you whether, and how long in advance, you have to stop taking this medication.
- A (potential) pregnancy
X-rays will be taken during this treatment, and these are potentially harmful to an unborn child.
- Diabetes

- Allergy or hypersensitivity to iodinated contrast agents, iodine, medication or adhesive plaster.

The day of the treatment

The treatment will be performed in the treatment rooms, location C 36. From the main entrance, follow the yellow route to the right (31-50). Upon arrival, you will report on time to the reception desk of the Treatment Centre.

You can sit down in the waiting room. Because X-rays will be taken, anyone accompanying you may not be present during the treatment. Typically, you will be ready after an hour, but count on staying in the hospital for approximately two hours.

During your treatment, the person accompanying you can use the restaurant in the hall.

The treatment

You will lie down on a narrow table on your stomach. The skin will be numbed at the site(s) of the needle insertion. Aided by radioscopy (direct observation of objects opaque to light using some form of radiant energy), the pain specialist will insert the needle(s). To check the position of the needle(s), contrast liquid is injected. The block is accomplished with a chemical fluid. The chemical fluid switches off the nerve bundle for a longer period of time. As a result, the blood flow in your leg and foot improves. In many cases, this leads to a reduction in pain.

A definitive block is always preceded for the first time with a test block, in which an anesthetic and a vasodilating medication are injected, after which the blood vessels of the affected limb are better supplied with blood and the pain is reduced. If the test block achieves a positive result, the pain specialist can decide to repeat the treatment, only with the injection of a chemical fluid.

If you have agreed with the care providers to receive sedation during your definitive block, you will be required to fast: six hours before the treatment, you will no longer be allowed to eat and drink.

The treatment lasts for approximately thirty minutes. After the treatment, you will be wheeled to the Day Treatment Department on your bed.

After approximately sixty minutes, the pain specialist will discuss with you when he/she wants to see you again at the outpatient clinic for a check-up.

Complications/side effects

The following complications or side effects may develop after a lumbar sympathetic block:

- Swelling of the leg or foot.
- Nerve pain or numbness in the groin and the upper leg.
- If a small blood vessel is hit during the insertion of the needle, bruising may appear. This bruising can be painful.

Home again

Post-treatment pain may occur as a result of the injection. Although this pain can last for several weeks, it is only temporary. You can take painkillers (e.g. paracetamol according to the package leaflet).

A plaster will be attached to the site of the needle insertion. You can remove this in the evening or on the following

day. At that point, you can shower and bathe again.

The results of the treatment can only be assessed after a few weeks. However, it is quite possible for you to notice a favorable effect sooner.

Questions?

Should you still have questions after reading this leaflet, you can contact the Pain Medicine Outpatient Clinic at +31 (0)20 755 7010.

Notes on this leaflet

If any information in this leaflet is unclear or incomplete, please notify us. You can share your remarks with us via voorlichting@zha.nl.