

Intercostal (test) block

Introduction

You will soon be coming to Amstelland Hospital for an intercostal test 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 an intercostal (test) block?

An intercostal nerve block is a form of treatment in which an anti-inflammatory agent is injected into a nerve that follows the rib. The goal is to reduce the pain. To assess whether an intercostal block will be a suitable treatment for you, a 'test block' is often first performed. As a test, the pain specialist will inject a short-acting anesthetic. Staff then examine the effect of the anesthetic. This provides the pain specialist with an impression of the cause of your pain, and he/she can assess whether an intercostal block treatment will be suitable for you.

The word 'intercostal' is the medical term for the area between two ribs. 'Block' indicates that the pain is 'blocked', as it were.

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. Please count on staying at the hospital for roughly an hour. During your treatment, the person accompanying you can use the restaurant in the hall.

The treatment

You will lie down on a narrow table. Depending on the treatment site, you will lie down either on your stomach or your back. The skin will be numbed at the site of the block. Aided by radiology (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, contrast liquid is injected. Next, the pain specialist will inject a short-acting anesthetic during a trial treatment and a long-acting anesthetic in combination with an anti-inflammatory agent for therapeutic treatment.

The treatment lasts for approximately ten minutes. After roughly fifteen minutes, the pain specialist can assess the effect of the test block. The anesthetic starts working optimally after fifteen to thirty minutes. At that point, the pain specialist will be able to assess the effect of the test block. Based on his/her findings, the pain specialist will discuss with you whether a follow-up appointment for a block is advisable.

Complications/side effects

The following complications or side effects may develop after an intercostal test block:

- If a small blood vessel is hit during the insertion of the needle, bruising may appear. This bruising can be painful.
- While inserting a needle into the chest and ribs, the lung membrane can be hit, causing a collapsed lung. The treatment is implemented with caution. Nevertheless, there is a slight possibility of this complication occurring. In case of a larger collapsed lung, a hospital admission may be required to administer the proper treatment.
- The blood sugar values of diabetic patients may fluctuate.
- Side effects of corticosteroids: flushing/hot flashes, disturbed menstrual cycle; the contraceptive pill will not be reliable until the next menstrual period.

Going home

After the treatment, you may not drive yourself on the same day. You must ensure that someone else brings you home.

Home again

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.

Attention!

If you are not experiencing any pain on the day of the test block, it is not advisable to proceed with the treatment. After all, you will not be able to judge whether the pain has gone down after receiving the anesthetic. In the event of no pain, telephone to schedule a new appointment.

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.