

Although there are many research papers that show the safety of these injections, the steroids are not licensed for this use. This means the official recommendation by the manufacturer does not include this. However, your doctor and official bodies such as The Pain Society are satisfied that this treatment is safe if properly carried out.

There have been some very rare reactions to injections that have resulted in bad nerve damage. These are **very** unlikely, only one case occurring in many thousands. But this does show that these injections should not be done without careful thought.

## What will I feel when I have the injection?

In most cases the injection takes about 10–15 minutes. Your back is cleaned with some cold antiseptic. The first injection of local (numbing) anaesthetic will sting, but this only lasts for a few seconds. The main injection will sometimes cause some discomfort but this does not last for long. You will rest afterwards and any discomfort should settle quickly.

## Do I have to stay in hospital?

In most cases this injection can be done in a morning or afternoon. You will only need to stay a few hours. Rarely, people can feel faint and may need to stay overnight.

## Will I need someone with me?

You will need a responsible adult to bring you to the hospital, drive you home (you should not drive for 24 hours) and stay with you overnight. **If this is difficult you must tell us in advance.**

## What should I do after the injection?

You should take things easy on the day of the paravertebral injection. You will need to rest before and after going home. You should not plan to do anything important that day.

The next day you should be able to do normal activities. It is important that you do not stop doing things and get stiff! You should not need to take more than two days off work. Many people can go back to work the following day.

If you have specific queries about your paravertebral injection please contact the **chronic pain management nurse specialist** on **01473 703435**.

Please ask if you need this leaflet in an alternative format

Issued by:  
East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust  
**Ipswich Hospital**, Heath Road, Ipswich IP4 5PD  
[www.esneft.nhs.uk](http://www.esneft.nhs.uk)



# Your Paravertebral Injection

***Pain Management Clinic  
Ipswich Hospital  
Heath Road  
Ipswich  
IP4 5PD  
Tel: 01473 703435***



This information leaflet is designed to give you some answers to questions you may have about your injection. It is not a substitute for talking directly to your doctor or nurse. If you have any doubts or worries about your treatment, please ask the nursing or medical staff.

## **What is a paravertebral injection?**

It is an injection close to your spine. It can be at any point: the lower back, upper back or neck. Your doctor will have already told you the place where you will have the injection.

The injection is placed next to the spine, close to the nerves that are causing your pain.

## **Will the injection cure me?**

No treatment is guaranteed to reduce the pain, but we think that the paravertebral injection stands a good chance of helping you.

The injection will hopefully help reduce your pain, but a cure is unlikely. There are several different causes of pain but paravertebral injections for long-term pain are usually done to help reduce nerve irritability.

The nerves may be irritable for various reasons. One of the most common causes is a disc problem.

The injection may help the pain, allowing the original disc problem to settle down, but it is not a cure. There are many similar problems which can cause pain.

## **How long will the injection last?**

We cannot predict this as everyone's pain behaves differently. If it does help it usually takes a couple of days to have an effect. A very good effect will last several months and will allow the original problem to settle down, but this is not guaranteed; some people may not get any benefit at all.

## **Will any illness or drugs I am taking affect the injection?**

You will already have discussed your general health with your doctor before deciding on the paravertebral injection, but sometimes things can change. If you have any problems that make you bruise or bleed easily, or if you are taking drugs to thin the blood (such as warfarin) you must tell the doctor.

Likewise, an infection may mean that the injection should be delayed until you are better.

## **Must I do anything special beforehand?**

Make sure that you bring a list of any tablets or other medication that you are taking, as well as information about allergies.

## **What will be injected?**

The first injection will be in the skin over your back. It is standard local anaesthetic called Lidocaine, which is similar to the numbing injection at the dentist.

The injection placed next to your spine is usually a steroid (your doctor will confirm this with you). This is designed to reduce irritability in the affected nerves and other tissues. It is not the same steroid that body builders use (anabolic steroid).

## **What are the side effects?**

Most medical treatments have side effects, and paravertebral injections are no exception. The most common side effect is backache from the injection due to minor bruising – this lasts a few days. It usually responds well to simple pain relievers, such as paracetamol.

Steroids can have side effects if overused, such as weight gain, muscle weakness and osteoporosis (bone weakness). These do not occur with the doses used for paravertebrals, but it does explain why we cannot do a lot of injections.

