



Information for adult patients undergoing

Intravenous Regional Analgesia for the Treatment of Pain

The aim of this leaflet is to give you information about Intravenous Regional Analgesia and to answer some questions that you may have. Please note that places may do things differently. 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, 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 anaesthetic then numbs the limb.

The procedure may be done alongside other treatments such as physiotherapy to the affected limb.

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Is this the right treatment for me?

Other treatment options will be discussed with you before deciding to have the injections and your consent is needed. The decision on whether or not to have the injection(s) is made together by you and your doctor. Your doctor will be able to give you up-to-date information about the chance of this treatment working for you and how it fits in with the rest of your care. If you are undecided about whether or not to have the injections then more advice and information can be given. 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 tell the doctor if there is any chance that you could be pregnant.

Finally, if you are planning to travel abroad or fly within 5 to 7 days after the injection, 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 ask for your consent before the injection or ask you to confirm that you have already given consent and are still happy to have the injection. The treatment will take place in a dedicated area with a trained person. Not all doctors give these injections in exactly the same way but this is what usually happens:

- ▶ A medical professional will get you ready for the procedure. Your blood pressure and pulse rate may be checked.
- ▶ 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 it does hurt.
- ▶ The doctor will then inject the local anaesthetic (and/or 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, along with dizziness. This feeling should stop 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 check on you. Sometimes you will be asked to lie flat for about 30 minutes or longer. You may be helped to sit up and your blood pressure and pulse may be checked. You will be told when to get dressed and be given help to make sure that you can stand safely after the procedure. You will be given more 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 go 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. Please make sure that you have someone to collect you after the procedure. It is unsafe for you to drive home straight 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, if you can't, you should at least have access to a telephone. You should not drive, operate machinery, sign legal documents, provide childcare without help or drink alcohol until fit to do so.

If you are not sure, please ask your doctor for more advice.

When can I return to work after the procedure?

This be different for different people and may depend on the type of work you do. 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, there may be side effects. 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 gets better over the first few days.
- ▶ The arm and leg may feel numb and weak. This is usually temporary and gets better.
- ▶ 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 do not always work and may not help your pain.

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People vary in how they interpret words and numbers.
This scale is provided to help.



What can I expect in the days afterwards?

You may feel 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 get better. Try to keep on the move about the house while avoiding anything too difficult.

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 do too much as you may have more pain the next day. Your doctor will be able to provide more specific advice.

What follow-up will be arranged?

A letter will usually be sent to your GP and your doctor will tell you 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 think about before the procedure?

- ▶ Please bring your glasses if you need them for reading.
- ▶ Bring any other devices you may need, such as hearing aids, mobility aids etc.
- ▶ Always bring a list of all current medication.
- ▶ Continue to take your medication as usual on the treatment day.

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Finally...

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's or health care team's advice. If you need 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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Acknowledgements:

Members of the Professional Standards Committee.