

Radio Frequency Denervation for the Treatment of Chronic Pain

Patient Information

Chronic Pain Service



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What is Radio Frequency Denervation?

This is a procedure in which we try to destroy the nerve that supplies the area causing you pain. This is done by heating the nerve with an electrical current. This treatment may offer longer term pain relief, particularly if other methods such as facet joint injections or medial branch blocks have been effective in the short term.

What you must do before the procedure

The doctor or nurse will discuss the procedure in clinic at the time of booking the treatment. If there is a possibility that you may be pregnant, please let us know. Consent for the procedure will be taken on the day and it will be carried out in a treatment room or operating theatre under sterile conditions. It is carried out as a day case procedure and you will have to stay between 2-4 hours afterwards. You will not be able to drive immediately afterwards so someone will have to transport you home and should stay around to help you overnight.

During the procedure

You may have a small cannula or 'drip' in the back of your hand, to enable the doctor to administer fluids and sedation as necessary. Blood pressure and heart rate monitors will be attached to you. A sticky pad will be applied to your thigh to complete the electrical circuit.

The procedure will be carried out with full asepsis (sterile and antiseptic precautions) in order to reduce the risk of infection. The doctor may use an x-ray or ultrasound machine to help with the procedure.

The area of interest will be made numb by injecting local anaesthetic. This may sting for few seconds before becoming numb. The special radio frequency probe will then be inserted, and you will be asked to describe any twitches, pins and needles or shock like sensations that you may feel in the area of your pain. This will help to place the radio frequency needle as close to the correct nerve as possible. The machine will then be set to heat the nerve for 1 to 2 minutes. This process will be repeated for each nerve that is due to be treated.

Post Procedure

Your pulse, blood pressure, and oxygen levels will be monitored for about half an hour in the recovery area. You will be observed until you are fit to be discharged.

You will be followed up in the pain clinic to assess your response to the treatment.

Commonly encountered problems / side effects

Your pain may feel worse afterwards before it then settles down. Sharp pain, pins & needles, and numbness may occur. These are usually temporary and will wear off.

Rarely encountered problems / side effects

A rare but potentially serious problem is the risk of permanent nerve damage that can result in permanent weakness or paralysis in your legs.

Another rare but serious risk is of permanent, continuing burning pain, which is different to the original pain that you have suffered from.

It is very important that you attend any appointments made for you with either, the Doctor; Nurse; Physiotherapist; Occupational therapist or the Psychologist. If you cannot attend, please cancel the appointment, and re-arrange, failure to cancel will result in discharge from the pain service and you will need to be re-referred by your GP if you wish to be seen again.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary
Wigan Lane
Wigan WN1 2NN

Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

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