

Headache Centre

Multiple cranial nerve blocks for headache and facial pain

Supraorbital, supratrochlear and auriculotemporal injections are referred to collectively as multiple cranial nerve blocks (MCNBs). This leaflet will answer your questions about what they are, how we use them to treat pain, and what happens after your treatment. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What are MCNBs?

There are two different types of MCNB, which can be given together or separately:

1. Supraorbital and supratrochlear nerve blocks (SONBs) - these involve injecting a small dose of local anaesthetic around the supraorbital and supratrochlear nerves, which are located on the forehead, above the eyebrows. These injections can be performed on one side of the head, or on both sides.
2. Auriculotemporal nerve blocks involve injecting a small dose of local anaesthetic around the auriculotemporal nerve, which is located at the side of the head, above the ear. These injections can also be performed either on one side of the head or on both sides.

Why is it done?

For many people with chronic or disabling headaches, it has been shown that injecting the supraorbital, supratrochlear and/or the auriculotemporal nerves, as part of a headache and/or facial pain management plan, can provide temporary benefits. These benefits are typically short-lived and may last a few weeks, but on occasion people get considerably longer periods of relief. The headaches and/or facial pain may become less frequent or severe, or may stop altogether for a period of time.

Please note that there is usually no advantage to giving the injection to someone whose headaches and/or facial pain are in remission. If your headaches have settled down between the time of booking the injection and the appointment itself, please discuss this with us before your appointment.

Are there any side effects?

As with any injection, there is a small risk of bleeding or bruising at the injection site, and a very small risk of infection. Sometimes people describe a worsening of the headache and/or facial pain, which is usually fairly short-lived (24 to 48 hours). Some people can experience dizziness after the injection, which is why we advise you to wait in the department for 10 to 15 minutes following the procedure, to ensure that you feel okay before going home.

Consent - asking for your consent

We want to involve you in decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to sign a consent form. This states that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves. If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

Please inform your specialist team if you have any allergies or known hypersensitivity to local anaesthetics.

What does it feel like?

Before carrying out the injection, the doctor will feel around the area to locate a spot which is suitable for injection. The injection itself uses a fine needle and, while the local anaesthetic can sting a little, the procedure is generally well tolerated and only takes approximately 10 minutes.

When having auriculotemporal nerve blocks, people occasionally report hearing the fluid being injected due to the site of the injection, but again this is not bothersome for most. The area of skin is swabbed with alcohol prior to injection, and we will apply a little pressure to the area afterwards to minimise bleeding.

After the injection you will probably feel some numbness at the front and/or side of your head, and possibly all over the side of your head that has been injected. This should disappear within two to four hours.

What can I expect in the days afterwards?

You might notice a lump and/or mild local soreness at the injection site, but this usually settles over the first few days. Please keep the area of the injections dry for 24 hours following the procedure. Do not worry if your headaches and/or facial pain feel worse for a few days as this sometimes happens. You may want to consider taking your regular painkillers and medications as normal until the pain settles.

Will it help my headaches?

This is difficult to predict with any certainty, but your doctor will have arranged for you to have the procedure because they felt that the injections are worth trying, and people do benefit from it. Please note that the benefit from the injections can vary from patient to patient.

What happens next?

We ask all of our headache patients to complete a headache diary every day, both before and after the injections. The diary will have been sent or given to you already. This can be used to identify headache patterns and trigger factors, and to assess an individual's response to a particular treatment. You will also be asked to complete a headache impact test (HIT-6) prior to the injections and then again approximately six weeks afterwards, this information will be collected in clinic during your appointments.

Failure to bring your headache diary to clinic makes it difficult for the clinician to assess your response to the injections and may result in the treatment being stopped.

Usually, if there has been no benefit from the injection within the first two weeks, then it is unlikely to occur.

If successful, these injections may sometimes be repeated on a regular basis.

What follow-up will be arranged?

You will receive a letter with a follow-up appointment date and time. Your appointment will either be a telephone call with a specialist nurse or in clinic with a consultant. If you haven't heard from us within 10 weeks following the procedure, please contact the department on 020 7188 8877 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) to talk to one of the administrative team.

Useful sources of information

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment, please contact the nurse via our voicemail on 020 7188 4714 or via email headachenurse@gstt.nhs.uk. We prioritise by clinical urgency, but aim to respond to all messages within a couple of days. Our current office hours are Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

If you have any administrative queries regarding appointments or admissions, please call 020 7188 8877 or email gst-tr.PainAppointmentAndAdmissions@nhs.net

If you have a significant medical problem or require urgent medical assistance, please contact your GP in the first instance. **If you think it is an emergency, please go straight to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E) or call 999.**

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

The Migraine Trust www.migrainetrust.org

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. **t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch. **t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk



Leaflet number: 4598/VER1

Date published: June 2018

Review date: June 2021

© 2018 Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
A list of sources is available on request