Guanethidine Block

Exceptional healthcare, personally delivered
What is a Guanethidine block?
Guanethidine is a drug which changes the way most pain messages are sent by your nerves. It can be given through a vein into your affected limb.

What will it do?
It may reduce the level of pain you have and therefore increase mobility in your affected arm or leg.

How is it done?
A small plastic needle will be inserted into your affected arm or leg. Sometimes another needle may be put into your other limb. A cuff will be inflated on the affected limb. This will remain tight for 20 minutes after the injection is given. This keeps the medication in the limb.

What are the risks of the procedure?
- As with any intravenous injection there is a 1 in 13,000 chance of an an anaphylactic reaction.
- Your pain may not be relieved or may worsen.
- You may pass out if the cuff is not sufficiently tight.
- As with any injection there may be infection around the injection site.
- There is a very small risk of nerve damage.

Will it hurt?
Local anaesthetic is mixed with the guanethidine so the injection will not be uncomfortable. Your limb will appear mottled during the 20 minutes and the cuff will feel tight. You may have a dry mouth.
What will I feel afterwards?

You may feel or get:

- Soreness or bruising. This will settle.
- A rash on your arm or leg.
- Light-headed when you get up for up to 30 minutes.

Can I go home straight after the injection?

We check your blood pressure after 5 minutes to ensure it hasn’t changed and if you are well you can be escorted home after 30 minutes.

Should I use my arm or leg?

You should try to use your affected limb as much as possible as this helps it get better more quickly.

How many injections will I need?

You may need at least 3 injections as the duration of relief often gets longer after each injection.

Can I drive?

You should not drive the same day as your procedure as your insurance may be void if you are involved in an accident.

References and further information


NHS Constitution. Information on your rights and responsibilities. Available at www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/constitution
If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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