Alcohol coeliac plexus block

What is an Alcohol Coeliac Plexus Block?
An alcohol coeliac plexus block is an injection of medicinal alcohol diluted in local anaesthetic around the bundle of nerves that supplies sensation to the bowel. Those same nerves can also transmit sensation of pain arising in the pancreas. It is found in the middle of the back in front of the spine and behind the main veins to and from the heart.

Why am I having this procedure?
You have had a coeliac plexus block with a local anaesthetic that has offered you a degree of relief of your symptoms that was considered significant by your doctor and you. Unfortunately it has now worn off. Alcohol can be much longer lasting than standard injections.

Are there any risks?
The procedure may fail to provide you with the expected relief. Unfortunately, we don’t know if this is going to be the case until we have done it. Your blood pressure will go down and that can make you feel a little lightheaded. Occasionally, you may develop muscle spasm in the back. If you take painkillers and continue to move your back normally it should settle within 7 to 10 days.
Other risks are rarer and may include infection, bleeding, nerve damage with pain into your legs, permanent urine retention that may need the use of a urinary catheter, perforation of bowel, veins or kidneys and permanent diarrhoea.
During the procedure it is normal to feel a painful sensation in your groin. This is from the needle going through some muscles and will settle within 12 hours. You should come prepared for an overnight stay as If there are any untoward complications we may need to admit you into hospital.

What will happen between now and the injection?
The doctor may have prescribed some painkillers for you to take and unless they are giving you side effects or not helping, you should continue to take them as advised.
What will happen on the day of the injection?
After you have been checked in by a nurse, your doctor will explain you the procedure and offer you the chance to ask questions. Sedation is not normally required for this procedure, but if you feel particularly anxious, it may be offered after discussion with your doctor. Then you will be asked to sign a consent form.
After that you will be escorted into the treatment room. A small plastic needle may be inserted into the back of your hand. Then you will be asked to lie on your front on the procedures table. Your back will be cleaned with antiseptic solution and some local anaesthetic will be injected into your skin. This will sting. You may feel a pushing sensation as the needle is put into the right place.
An X-ray machine and X-ray dye will be used during the procedure to help identify the correct position of the needle. You may feel pressure as the solution of alcohol and local anaesthetic is injected. Then the needle will be removed and your back will be cleaned. You will be then transferred onto a trolley/chair and taken back to your ward where you can eat/drink. Your blood pressure and pulse will be checked. Depending on how your blood pressure and heart rate stay after the procedure you may need to be admitted into a ward for overnight stay or you may be allowed to go home once the discharge criteria are satisfied.

How will I feel afterwards?
Your tummy may feel: You may develop:
– Warm
– Tingly
– Numb
– Stiff
– No different
– Lightheadedness
– Nausea
– Flushing
– Headache
– Flu like symptoms

Important things to remember
– Nothing to eat for 4 hours or drink for 2 hours before the procedure.
– You will need an escort who will take you home.
– If you have any special requirements please contact the Pain Management Unit at least 48 hours in advance.
– Please bring your regular painkillers with you.
– If you are on any blood thinners then you need to discuss this with your doctor regarding stopping it.
Can I drive afterwards?
You should not drive for 24 hours after the injection, as your insurance may be void if you are in an accident.

When can I shower/bathe?
Usually the day after the procedure.

When can I return to normal activity?
Although there may be an initial improvement from the small amount of local anaesthetic, the alcohol component of the injection will not work up to 48 hours following the treatment. Your back may take up to 2 weeks to recover from the injection. You may do gentle physical activity for 24 to 48 hours following the procedure. If your job is physical up to 5 days of gentle activity is advisable. If your job is sedentary, you may return within 48 hours. However, each individual's response may vary following the procedure.

Any queries?
If you have any concerns regarding this treatment please contact:
During working hours: Pain Management Unit 0118 322 8261.
Out of hours/weekends: please contact your GP or the out of hours service for advice.

More information is available on the Trust website: www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust
London Road
Reading RG1 5AN
Telephone 0118 322 5111

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.