



CT-Guided Neck Nerve Root Injection for Arm Pain (Cervical Transforaminal Epidural Steroid Injection)

One-page summary of the full Spinemathema guide. Scan the QR code for the full guide, with references and audio.

Key points

- Arm pain from a trapped nerve in the neck (cervical radiculopathy) usually improves a great deal over weeks to months. Most people never need an injection or an operation.
- A CT scanner guides a fine needle to the opening where the nerve leaves the spine, and local anaesthetic and a steroid are placed next to the nerve.
- In studies without a comparison group, about 35 to 55 in 100 people had at least half of their pain relieved weeks to months later. Randomised trials are few and small, and the evidence is of low to very low certainty.
- Short-lived side effects, such as a pain flare, a numb arm for some hours or a rise in blood sugar, are fairly common.
- Very rarely, neck injections have caused stroke, spinal cord injury or death. The true risk is unknown but very small.
- NICE has no guideline on neck injections; NG59 covers the lower back only.

After a neck injection, call 999 or go to A&E if you have:

- Signs of a stroke (FAST): one side of the face drooping, being unable to lift both arms and keep them up, or slurred or confused speech. Time to call 999.
- Weakness or numbness down one side of the body, or spreading beyond the injected arm, for example into the face, the other arm or the legs.
- Blurred vision or loss of sight, feeling dizzy or falling over, or difficulty speaking or thinking of words.
- A headache that starts suddenly and is extremely painful, or a headache with a seizure (fit).
- A headache with a very high temperature, a stiff neck, or bright lights bothering you.

Some numbness or weakness in the injected arm for a few hours is expected. The symptoms above are different. Call 999 even if they stop, and do not drive yourself to A&E.

Not sure how urgent it is? Call NHS 111. More warning signs: spinemathema.com/warning-signs

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General information only, not personal medical advice.

If you are worried about your symptoms, contact your GP,

NHS 111, or in an emergency call 999.

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Scan for the full guide