Nerve Root Injections: What to Expect

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

Key points

- A nerve root injection places local anaesthetic and steroid next to an irritated spinal nerve.
- It is usually a day-case procedure using X-ray guidance and takes around 20 to 30 minutes.
- It can reduce leg or arm pain and help confirm which nerve is causing symptoms.
- The benefit varies from person to person, and the effect may be temporary.

Contact your team or seek urgent help if you notice:

- A temperature above 38°C, or swelling, redness or warmth around the injection site
- Bleeding from the injection site that will not stop
- A new, unusual headache, a stiff neck or nausea, or a severe headache that is worse when sitting up
- Numbness or weakness that does not wear off after a few hours
- Difficulty passing urine or holding your urine, numbness around your bottom or genitals, or loss of bowel control: call 999 or go to A&E

For urgent advice, call NHS 111. In an emergency, call 999 or go to A&E.

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

Last checked: October 2026

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.

Written by Mr Ahmed-Ramadan Sadek, Neurosurgeon.

Scan for the full guide