

Having aqueous phenol injection for muscle spasticity

Neurology Rehabilitation

Information for Patients

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What is phenol?

Phenol is a type of alcohol.

It has been used for many years to treat muscle stiffness (spasticity).

It was the treatment for this till Botulinum toxin injections became available.

Phenol injections can be used to destroy the nerves that we know send electric signals to the muscles.

This leaflet only covers the use of 5% aqueous phenol. It is used to treat muscle spasticity that has not responded to Botulinum toxin in selected patients who may be suitable for this.

Neurolysis is a procedure where a chemical like 5% aqueous phenol is injected.

It disables a specific nerve for a short time. It is done to relieve pain and reduce spasticity.

What is muscle spasticity?

Muscle spasticity is a tightening of muscles that you cannot control (involuntary contraction). It can cause pain, stiffness and difficulty moving the joints. Any neurological illness may lead to spasticity. Some common causes are stroke, brain injury and multiple sclerosis (MS).

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What are the benefits of having 5% aqueous phenol injections for muscle spasticity?

We will talk to you about this before the treatment begins.

- It can help you with your personal care. The treated limb will have more flexibility. Or you will have less discomfort during moving and handling.
- It can reduce muscle spasms
- It may improve positioning of limbs
- It may reduce pain caused by muscle spasticity

Is 5% aqueous phenol right for me?

5% aqueous phenol may be useful for treating spasticity that has not responded to Botulinum toxin injection.

It is not suitable for you if you:

- are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- have an infection near the injection site.
- have a condition/ disorder which causes general muscle weakness (like myasthenia gravis, with changing muscle weakness).
- are very unwell with an infection that is not under control.
- have widespread or general spasticity involving many parts of your body.
- You may not be able to have 5% phenol injections if you are taking blood thinning medication like warfarin or rivaroxaban or apixaban.

We will talk to you about the risks and benefits before the actual treatment.

What can I expect from this treatment?

5% aqueous phenol tends to take effect right away. Its effects last for 4 to 12 months.

Phenol injections can cause a slight burning pain. You will have a local anaesthetic to numb the injection site.

What are the side effects?

Possible side effects from phenol injections may include

- soreness at the injection sites
- nerve pain
- swelling
- numbness.

All these effects are short-term when they occur. Some take longer than others to go away.

Other side effects include:

- infection
- allergic reaction
- nerve injury to a nearby area
- pain or discomfort in the area injected
- a sore (ulcer) or a pocket of pus (abscess) can form in the area where the injection was given

Rare side effects:

- Some of the injected phenol can enter your circulatory system. This can cause serious heart, breathing or kidney problems. We would need to deal with right away. You need to get urgent medical advice.
- The treatment might not help your pain, and could make it worse

What aftercare advice do I need to follow?

To get the most from the injection, you should do daily stretching of the injected muscles or use a splint to stretch them.

You may be referred for physiotherapy, a home exercise programme or to Occupational Therapy to get a splint fitted.

Contact details;

Clinic Coordinator Spasticity Clinic: 0116 258 4494 (8am to 4pm)

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