

Denervation/Radiofrequency lesions

What is denervation?

Denervation is a procedure in which a particular nerve is treated so that it can no longer carry pain signals.

Special needles are used to create lesions along selected nerves. Heat is applied to the nerve through these needles for about for one to two minutes. This procedure disrupts nerve conduction, and may reduce pain and other related symptoms. Sometimes pain relief lasting for upto one year may be achieved.

How is it actually performed?

The needles are positioned using bony landmarks that indicate where the nerves usually are. X-ray is used to identify those bony landmarks.

In order to decide correct needle positioning a current will be passed through the needle. If the position is correct you will feel change in sensation, like pressure or tingling. This means the correct nerve is identified. This nerve is now destroyed by heating the tip of the needle with radiofrequency current.

Depending on the areas to be treated the procedure can take from about 30 minutes to an hour.

What are the benefits of denervation?

This procedure is expected to give pain relief from the pain of the affected joint for upto a year. However, if the pain is coming from other sources or triggers there will be no relief

Are there any risks?

As with any other procedure, there is a small chance of infection.

There is a small chance of unintended damage to other nerves.

You may get increased pain immediately after the procedure which could last for a few weeks. There is a very small chance of worsening pain in the long term.

How long will I be in hospital?

You will be asked to attend the hospital on day of your procedure. A letter providing all the information will be sent to you before the date of your procedure. Please ensure you arrive 2 hours before the procedure. You may be in hospital for a period of upto 6 hours. Very rarely, in case of complications an overnight stay may be required.

What happens before the procedure?

You may eat a light meal and drink normally prior to your treatment. Please arrive in good time for your appointment. Prior to the treatment, Dr Desai will explain and you will be able to ask any questions you like about your treatment. When you are completely satisfied, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

It is important that you tell the doctor if:

- You are taking Aspirin, Warfaarin or other similar drugs
- You have a bleeding problem
- You are allergic to local anaesthetic
- You have any serious medical problems
- Or if you are unwell on the day.

What should I expect after the procedure?

There will be a period of rest after the procedure. During this time you will be able to eat and drink normally. The nurse will assess whether you are ready to go home. You should not drive yourself. You should be able to resume driving 24hrs after the procedure if you feel sufficiently recovered.

An appointment letter for follow up to see Dr Desai after 4 to 6 weeks will already have been sent.

For a few days after the treatment, you may find that the pain is worse than before. This is due to the procedure itself.

There will be some muscle soreness that may persist for up to a week.

Application of ice packs will help. Take your normal painkillers if soreness persists. Although most patients experience significant relief within a week, it can sometimes take up to 3-4 weeks.

You should be able to return to your work a day or two. Sometimes the soreness and discomfort after the procedure may prolong your return to work.