

The ROYAL MARSDEN

NHS Foundation Trust

Pain or bruising following the insertion of a needle

Patient Information



NHS

What was the cause of pain during the procedure?

Usually when you undergo a procedure such as a blood test or cannulation it is not very painful. However, today, it appears that the needle may have touched a nerve. This is why you felt the sharp, shooting pain.

Why did I get pain during this procedure?

Most veins have a nerve alongside them. Unfortunately, we cannot see or feel your nerves. They usually lie deep in your tissues but sometimes they are close to the surface.

What have you done about it?

We removed the needle immediately after you felt the pain. This should have prevented any damage to the nerve.

When will the pain go?

You may have a tingling numb feeling in the area for a couple of hours.

What should I do if the pain continues, or gets worse or I get a change in sensation such as numbness in the area?

You must call us or seek advice from your GP or, if you are returning to the hospital, let a member of clinical staff know such as a nurse or radiographer. We will follow it up with your doctor. In some circumstances we may need to refer you to a specialist to review the pain.

Why have I got a bruise?

A bruise may develop after any procedure involving the insertion of a needle, such as a blood test or cannulation.

It is caused by blood leaking from the vein into the tissues.

Some people are more at risk of bruising, for example:

- If you are taking blood thinning drugs (anticoagulants) such as Warfarin, Clopidogrel, Aspirin, or are on blood thinning injections
- If you have a low platelet count
- If you generally bruise more easily.

It may also be as a result of problems during the procedure such as having trouble finding a vein, or simply not pressing for long enough when the needle is removed.

What can be done to prevent bruising?

Please tell us if you are on anticoagulants or if you bruise more easily, as we can press for a longer time after the needle is removed.

We also ask that you keep your arm straight whilst pressing after a blood test as bending your arm can cause more bruising.

Is there anything I can do about bruising?

Putting an ice pack on the area may reduce any swelling. Some people have found arnica gel/cream helpful in relieving the discomfort and discolouration of bruises. This can be bought over the counter at your local chemist.

Please call us if your bruise becomes larger or if you experience any numbness in your arm or hand.

You can also contact us should you have any questions.

Contact details

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899

Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

References

This leaflet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this leaflet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre
Freephone: 0800 783 7176
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Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

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