

### What is an occipital nerve block?

An occipital nerve block is a diagnostic procedure traditionally useful in the treatment of occipital neuralgia. It has also been shown to benefit sufferers of more complex headache syndromes involving migraine, cervicogenic and tension headache features, where occipital region pain or scalp sensitivity is prominent.

### What is involved in an occipital nerve block?

An occipital nerve block is a minimally invasive procedure performed in the Interventional Procedure Centre (IPC) of North Shore Private Hospital as a day procedure. The IPC is located in Royal North Shore on level 4.

Your procedure will involve you being given intravenous sedation by an anaesthetist to help you relax during the procedure. Specialised x-ray equipment allows your doctor to safely place a needle near the nerves that supply the facet joint and administer a small amount of local anaesthetic to numb the nerve.

### Before my procedure

You will be contacted by North Shore Private Hospital the night before your procedure to be given instructions about admission times and fasting. Northern Pain Centre is committed to understanding and improving the management of your pain, which is why you will be given a pain diary to assess the effectiveness of your procedure. You will be asked to fill this out before and after your procedure.

### Medications

Please read the Preoperative Medication Instructions Category B Pain Procedures that have been given to you.

### After my procedure

Following your procedure, you will spend a short period of time in the recovery ward before being discharged home. You must arrange to have someone drive you home due to the anaesthetic you received during the procedure.

It is important for you to perform any activities that would normally provoke your pain to test the effectiveness of this procedure. You will be contacted by Northern Pain Centre to determine if the procedure was successful. Successful procedures will be scheduled for a pulsed radiofrequency to the occipital nerve. Unsuccessful procedures will have a follow-up appointment booked to discuss your next treatment options.

The day after your procedure you may return to driving, work and your normal diet and fluids. Please remove your dressing and monitor the procedure site until healed.

### Important information

You may have some numbness and weakness surrounding your normal painful area and procedure site for the hours after your procedure due to the local anaesthetic given (this will resolve but please contact us or your local GP if you are concerned).

It is normal to be tender at the procedure site for a short period of time after the procedure. It is normal for the pain relief from the block to only last for 4-12hrs after the procedure and for your underlying pain to increase in the days after the procedure.

Please contact your local GP or the rooms if you have any allergic reactions to the medication administered in hospital, signs of infection at your procedure site (yellow discharge, abnormal pain, heat, swelling or a temperature), severe headache, severe pain at procedure site or any questions or concerns.