

Venesection

What is Venesection?

Venesection is the process of withdrawing blood from a vein (usually 500mls). This procedure can be used as treatment for certain blood conditions like haemochromatosis and polycythaemia. The blood is taken in a similar way if you are a blood donor. Your blood is being taken for therapeutic purposes and will be discarded and never reused.

Why would I need this procedure?

Patients receive this treatment if they have either:

1. Too much iron in the blood which can damage their liver.
2. Too many red cells in the blood and are at risk of blood clots (because the ratio of red cells to fluid in the blood stream is imbalanced/incorrect).
3. Other causes of high iron in the blood such as long-term liver disease, conditions that need frequent blood transfusion, alcohol misuse, excess iron intake from supplements or long-term dialysis and rare inherited conditions that affects red blood cells.

What are the symptoms that have led to me having this procedure?

Although haemochromatosis is inherited, the build-up of iron in the body happens quite slowly and symptoms do not usually appear until a person is aged 30-40 years old. Another reason for Venesection is if you are diagnosed with polycythaemia, a condition when you have too many red blood cells in your blood. Symptoms are headaches, blurred vision, bleeding problems and blood clots.

What are the alternatives?

Your consultant has recommended venesection as the best way to treat you. If you would like to know more about alternative treatment, please speak to your consultant or Nurse Specialist.

What are the potential risks and side effects?

Venesection is safe, simple and a quick treatment. When the needle is inserted into the vein it may be uncomfortable for a few seconds. When the needle is removed it may bleed but pressure is applied for a few minutes and a dressing will be applied to the site. You may experience bruising and mild discomfort. Rarely, the site may bleed after you have left the department. If this happens, sit or lie down, raise your arm above your head and apply firm pressure over the site for a minimum of five minutes. Observe the site and if you are unable to stop the bleeding yourself consider contacting NHS 111 or in an emergency call 999. Scarring from long term needle insertion is unavoidable and we will try and use alternative veins to reduce scarring.

What are the expected benefits of treatment?

Venesection is considered a simple and effective way of reducing the number of red blood cells and iron in your blood.

What should I do before I come into hospital?

You are required to have blood test done approximately one week before your appointment to confirm you need to have the procedure. To book an appointment for a blood test at any of our sites.

Please contact the Phlebotomy Department at 0300 131 5560 which is open from 0830 to 1630 Monday to Friday. You can now book online via www.esht.nhs.uk/BloodTest. Or you can have it done at your GP surgery.

Please ensure that you inform the nurse performing your procedure of any medications you take regularly, particularly for controlling your blood pressure or preventing blood clots (blood thinners). Please eat a few hours prior to the procedure, keep well hydrated and warm prior, which may help blood flow and reduce risk of fainting. You will be offered extra fluids while having Venesection. The procedure is performed in an Outpatient setting by nurses who have received the appropriate training.

Will I have an anaesthetic?

We do not routinely offer local anaesthetics for this procedure. If you have particular concerns about how you will cope with the procedure, please discuss these with your consultant or nurse specialists prior to attending for Venesection.

How will I feel afterwards?

Most people carry on as normal after they have left the department. You may feel a little dizzy if your blood pressure may be lowered. This is not unusual and can be minimised by resting before you leave the department and having something to drink. Some people may feel tired for a couple of days, and you may experience some bruising and mild pain at the site.

How long will I be in hospital?

The procedure itself lasts for about ten to fifteen minutes but you should allow about an hour for your visit.

What should I do when I go home?

Keep the dressing on for at least three hours after the procedure and drink plenty of water. It is recommended that you rest when you get home but you may feel well enough to go straight back to work right after the procedure.

How soon will I be able to resume normal activities?

You are advised not to carry heavy loads and avoid vigorous sport, exercise or heavy work for the next 24 hours.

Will I have to come back to hospital?

You will receive another appointment for venesection depending on your results.

When can I return to work?

Depending on the type of work you do, you may be able to return to work immediately after the procedure. Please discuss any concerns with your Venesection Nurse.

Consent

Consent is usually discussed during your appointment with the Consultant. Although you consent for this treatment, you may withdraw that consent at any time. Please discuss this with your consultant.

Sources of information

This leaflet is based on information from the Haemochromatosis Society information booklet who has given their permission for it to be reproduced. Further information can be found on the NHS website (Links: www.nhs.uk/conditions; www.blood.co.uk)

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

For any non-urgent queries please contact:

1. **General Outpatient Department (Conquest Hospital)** Monday to Friday - 8am-6pm at 0300 131 4823
2. **General Outpatient Department (Eastbourne DGH)** Monday to Friday – 8am-6pm at 0300 131 5838 or leave a short message with your name, hospital number, contact number and your queries at 0300 131 4500 Ext 770580. Please note this is for **Eastbourne Venesection patients only**.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

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The directorate group that has agreed this patient information leaflet:

Core Services

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