

Information for patients Baclofen Pump



Midland Centre for Spinal Injuries

What is Baclofen?

Baclofen is a skeletal muscle relaxant. It has been used orally for many years in the treatment of spasticity.

What is a baclofen pump?

A Baclofen pump delivers the same drug directly to the spinal cord. As it is delivered directly, the drug is more effective with regard to reducing muscle spasms. In addition, side effects on the patients body in general are reduced or avoided.

What is spasticity and what causes it?

Spasticity is tight, stiff muscles that can make movements, especially of the arms and legs, difficult or uncontrollable. It happens when certain nerve signals do not reach muscles because of injury or disease that affects part of the brain or a spinal cord injury. Examples of conditions associated with spasticity include brain and spinal injury, stroke, multiple sclerosis and cerebral palsy.

What are the problems that can be caused by excessive spasticity?

Excessive spasticity can interfere with sleep. During the day it interferes with activities of daily living.

- It can affect the rehabilitation programme
- Spasticity can be accompanied by pain
- It can affect bladder function
- Mobility and transfers can be made difficult. Because of abrasion of skin, it can cause pressure sores

What are the treatment options of spasticity?

Spasticity can be treated with oral medications such as Baclofen or Dantrolene.

Other methods include Botulinum toxin injections to specific muscles or insertion of an intrathecal Baclofen pump.

Physiotherapy can help using positioning techniques and passive movements.

How are people selected for Baclofen pump insertion?

The inclusion criteria:

Severe spasticity due to spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, brain injury (1 year post trauma or any other etiology i.e. trauma, stroke and anoxia).

- a.) Unresponsive to medical treatment
- b.) Unacceptable side effects of oral medication
- c.) No contraindication to surgery
- d.) Patient and carers agree on treatment goals that are both explicit and suitable for patient

The exclusion criteria:

- a.) Infection is present at time of screening or implant
- b.) Patient has a history of allergy to oral Baclofen

Surgery

The operation is done under general anaesthesia. Two incisions are required, one in the middle of the lower back for insertion of the catheter, and another in the abdomen for the pump to be fitted. Through the first incision in the back, a tube (catheter) is inserted inside the back bone on the lower end of the spinal cord. This tube is then fed under the skin to the front of the body. It is then connected to the pump.

What are the risks of the operations?

These will be discussed with you in detail on your admission to hospital.

The following are the most common complications:

- The possibility of adverse reactions to anaesthesia
- Risk of bleeding which may require a blood transfusion
- Risk of infection
- Bladder control can be altered
- Sexual and bowel function can be altered
- Implant failure
- Catheter disconnection

What will happen after the operation?

After the operation, you will be kept under close observation for about 24 hours. You will be kept flat in bed for a few days. The total length of stay in the hospital will range between one to two weeks but obviously depends on your general condition. The dose of Baclofen in the pump will be adjusted according to your needs. The wounds will be watched for any signs of infection. You may need antibiotics.

Refills of the pump

Refilling the pump is done as an outpatient (on average every 10-14 weeks) Usually it is a painless procedure. The pump is refilled by inserting a needle into the centre of the reservoir, filling it with Baclofen solution. The visits will take approximately 45 minutes.

Contact Details

The Midlands Centre for Spinal Injuries Out Patients Department:

01691 404643 Monday to Thursday 8:00am - 5:00pm

Wrekin Ward: Directline **01691 404406**

Gladstone Ward: Directline **01691 404413**

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print. Arrangements can also be made on request for it to be explained in your preferred language. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: rjah.pals.office@nhs.net

Feedback

Tell us what you think of our patient information leaflet. Please send your comments to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: rjah.pals.office@nhs.net

Date of publication: March 2024

Date of review: March 2027

Author: Mr A Osman

© RJAH Trust 2024

**The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt
Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust,
Oswestry, Shropshire SY10 7AG
Tel: 01691 404000
Web: www.rjah.nhs.uk**