

## PATIENT INFORMATION

# Greater Occipital Nerve Injection (GONI)

For use in migraine management

## What is a greater occipital nerve injection?

A greater occipital nerve injection (GONI) is a procedure where a local anaesthetic, often combined with a steroid, is injected around the **greater occipital nerves**. These nerves are located on both sides of the head, running from the back of the neck to the top of the head. The injection helps to reduce pain signals from the nerve, which can alleviate migraine and headache symptoms.

## How does a GONI work?

The **greater occipital nerve** communicates with the **trigeminal nerve**, which is responsible for transmitting pain signals in the head and face. By blocking the greater occipital nerve, the injection reduces pain signals travelling through these pathways, helping to relieve migraines and other types of headaches.

## Who is a GONI for?

A GONI may be recommended for:

- People with **chronic migraines** or other persistent headache types, especially when other treatments have not been effective.
- People who experience head and scalp pain linked to overactivity of the occipital nerves.

## Who should not have a GONI?

This procedure is not suitable for:

- People who are **allergic** to the medications being injected (local anaesthetic or steroids).
- People with an **active infection** near the injection site.

## What should I expect during the procedure?

- A small needle will be used to inject the medication into both sides of your head at the back of the skull.
- The procedure is quick and may cause mild discomfort during the injection.
- The back of your skull and the top of your head may feel numb for several hours due to the local anaesthetic.

## Possible side effects

As with any procedure, side effects can occur, although they are usually mild and short-lived.

### *Common side effects:*

- A lump or **bruised sensation** at the injection site lasting a few days.
- Temporary **numbness** of the scalp.

### *Less common side effects:*

- **Worsening of headache** (in about 1 in 30 people), which usually resolves on its own.
- **Infection** at the injection site (rare).
- **Temporary hair loss** at the injection site (very rare).
- **Fainting** during or after the injection, especially if you are prone to fainting.

Contact your doctor immediately if you experience signs of infection (e.g., redness, swelling, or warmth at the injection site).

## Other considerations

- **After the procedure:** You will need someone to drive you home after the injection, as the procedure may cause temporary numbness or discomfort.
- **Follow-up:** You will be reviewed in the Headache Clinic to assess the effectiveness of the injection and to discuss further steps if needed.

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.