



PHENTOLAMINE INFUSION

A phentolamine infusion has been recommended to determine if the sympathetic nerves are causing your pain. If sympathetic overactivity is causing pain, we expect a sympathetic block with phentolamine will reduce your pain for some time after the infusion has been performed.

Phentolamine (Regitine) blocks 'alpha' receptors in the affected part that are normally stimulated by the chemical noradrenaline released from sympathetic nerve endings. One cause of the pain and skin changes in complex regional pain syndromes is thought that is excessive alpha receptor stimulation by noradrenaline. Phentolamine prevents noradrenaline induced receptor activation and should reduce or abolish pain and allow warmth and a pink colour to return to the affected part if sympathetic overactivity is contributing to the pain.

PROCEDURE:

The infusion is performed in hospital, and takes about two hours to complete. An intravenous saline infusion is commenced through a small needle in the back of the hand and doses of phentolamine are then injected into the drip tubing at various times over a period of thirty minutes until the desired dose has been reached.

DRUG EFFECTS:

The main effect of phentolamine is to lower blood pressure; this may cause a slight increase in heart rate, which is a normal response to a lowered BP. You may have a stuffy nose, droopy eyelids, flushing, headache and rarely shivering for several hours and rarely some patients report mild nausea or sleepiness. Should you require any further information, please ask the doctor.

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS:

No strenuous exercise, gradually increase range of normal activity. You may feel dizzy when you stand up during the first 12 hours after the infusion. If you feel unduly dizzy after discharge, lie down with your feet raised. Transport home must be arranged. Do not drive a car, operate hazardous equipment or make important decisions for 12-24 hours after the infusion. Please arrange a review in 1-2 weeks or after the series blocks have finished.