

Selective Dorsal Rhizotomy (SDR) – Information for Children

What is Selective Dorsal Rhizotomy / SDR?

Selective Dorsal Rhizotomy (or SDR) is an operation on your back to help relax stiff leg muscles.

Who are the Leeds SDR Team?

John Goodden – Consultant Neurosurgeon
Raj Lodh – Consultant in Paediatric Neurorehabilitation
Kate McCune – Highly Specialised Physiotherapist
Andie Mulkeen & Sharron Peacock – Nurse Specialists

Why do I need SDR?

Stiff muscles can make it difficult for you to move your legs. They can also be painful sometimes.

If you have difficulty moving your legs it can often make walking, crawling and moving around more difficult. It can also make you trip over more often or make your splints or shoes uncomfortable. All these things can make it harder for you to keep up with your friends when playing.

The SDR operation helps relax stiff muscles making it easier for your legs to move and therefore making it easier for you to play and join in with your friends.

What happens when I come to the first hospital appointment?

The first stage is to come to the children's outpatient department with your family to meet the hospital team and see if SDR might help you. In the outpatient department you will wait in the waiting area where we have lots of toys to play with until it is time for your appointment.

The first person you will meet will be the physiotherapist. You and your family will go to one of the clinic rooms with the physio who will ask you and your family some questions and then ask you to do some walking, crawling, kneeling, standing, lying down and stretches (like the ones you do at home or with your local physio). If you normally wear splints or use a special walker they will let you use them in clinic (so don't forget to bring them with you).

Two doctors will want to meet you and your family. They will ask lots more questions about how you are doing with your moving around at home or school and what sort of things you find hard to do such as running or walking.

After all the questions the doctor will want to see you walk and then do some stretches on your legs again.

All these things help the team decide if any of your muscles are stiff. If the team think that your stiff muscles are making things difficult for you they will talk to you and your family about SDR and how it may help you.

If you don't understand anything at any point you can always ask the team what they mean and they will be more than happy to explain things to you.

The hospital appointment can take up to 2 hours so bring along some toys you like, a drink and a snack. Shorts are also a good idea as well.

After the hospital appointment you will go home until it is time for you to come back to the ward to have the operation. This will probably be a few months away.

What happens when I come to the hospital for my operation?

You and your family will come to the ward late morning and meet the nurses. Once you are settled in the physio will come and fetch you to go to their physio room and do some more activities.

In the physio room the physio will ask you to do some crawling, rolling, climbing, sitting on a bench, walking and some stretches. All these activities will be videoed so the physio can look at it later and compare how much you may have changed after the operation.

When the physio has finished you will go back to the ward and meet the doctor who is going to look after you during the operation. He will ask you and your family some questions.

After you have met everybody you will sleep on the ward that night with one person from your family in a bed next to yours. There is a playroom on the ward as well as televisions and computer games for you to play with.

When you wake up it will be nearly time to go for the operation. Unfortunately you will not be allowed any breakfast, as your tummy must be empty to have the operation.

The nurse and your family will then go to a special part of the hospital called the theatre. Here you will meet some more lovely nurses and doctors who will give you some special medicine to make you go to sleep ready for the operation.

You will be fast asleep for the operation and will not feel anything at all. When you wake up it will be all finished and you will have your family with you. You will also find that you have some tubes in your arm, back and one to help you wee.

When you have woken up the nurse will take you and your family to a special ward where you will stay in bed for 2 or 3 days. After the 2 or 3 days the tubes in your arm, back and helping you wee will be taken out and you will have some medicine to swallow regularly. You will then go back to the ward where you were before the operation.

When you get back to the ward the physio will start coming to see you twice a day. You will go to the physio room and play lots of games to help make your muscles strong. Sometimes walking and moving can feel harder than it did before the operation. You need to work very hard with the physio to make sure this gets better.

You will usually be discharged from the ward 4-5 days after the operation. You will come back for physiotherapy every weekday for 3 weeks, either for 1-hour or 2 30-minute sessions. In between times and at weekends you are able to go out of the hospital and might be able to go home if its not too far away if the doctors says you can.

Does it hurt?

You will be asleep for the operation and afterwards you will have medicine to make sure it doesn't hurt too much. Usually children don't find it very painful but it might hurt a little bit.

When can I go home?

After 3 weeks it will be time to go home but the hard work doesn't stop there. It is really important that you carry on doing your exercises at home with your family and your local physio. This will help your legs get stronger and make your walking even better.

When will I come back to hospital?

If any of your leg muscles are very tight after the SDR operation, sometimes children need to come back for a second, small operation to make those tight muscles loose again. If this is going to happen the doctors will talk to you and your family and tell you all about it.

Otherwise the doctor and the physio will want to see you again in the children's outpatient department in 4 months' time and then again once a year to see how you are doing and if they can help with anything else.

If you have any questions before or after coming to the hospital please phone one of the teams physiotherapists below between 08.30 – 16.30 Mon – Fri

Spasticity Nurses – Andie Mulkeen & Sharron Peacock – 0113 392 2640

Kate McCune – 0113 392 6361

Mr Goodden's Secretary – 0113 392 8413

Dr Lodh's Secretary – 0113 392 6903