

Joint Injection

Patient Information

What is it? This can be used for diagnosis or treatment of joint problems.

Joint injection for diagnostic purposes:

We may perform an injection of contrast material into your joint before MRI scanning in order to give us more diagnostic information about the joint when you have your MRI. This injection consists of a very small amount of iodine – based contrast material (to confirm that our needle is in a good position in the joint cavity) and a further small injection of gadolinium contrast material given through the same needle. We can see the gadolinium contrast material on the MRI images.

Joint injection as treatment:

Alternatively, you may be having a joint injection in order to treat suspected inflammation in your joint. The injection will consist of local anaesthetic and steroid medication. This will help to relieve pain and increase your mobility if the main cause of the pain is indeed joint inflammation.

Sometimes it can be difficult for your doctor to know exactly what is causing your joint pain. If the pain is not due mainly to joint inflammation, the injection may not produce much improvement in your symptoms. Although this may be disappointing to you, it can be helpful information for your doctor as it means that another cause of the joint pain needs to be considered.

Preparation - No particular preparation is necessary for a joint injection. You may eat and drink as normal. Please bring any previous x-rays.

We need to know prior to the procedure if:

1. You have any allergies or you get asthma. We especially want to know if you have had a reaction of any kind to the contrast material used for MRI, CT scanning or x-ray procedures.
2. You are taking medication to prevent blood clots i.e. anticoagulant medication
3. You are pregnant

Technique

- The procedure is performed under sterile conditions, with disinfection of the skin and joint.
- You will be asked to lie down on an examination table with an X ray tube over it called the “fluoroscopy table”. Fluoroscopy allows us to look at your joint with x-rays while we accurately position the needle for injection.
- Local anaesthetic is injected in to the skin.
- A fine needle is then inserted into the joint, using x-ray control. A small amount of iodine – based contrast medium is injected to ensure that the needle is within the joint. We may inject either steroids or gadolinium contrast material , depending upon whether you are having a diagnostic or therapeutic joint injection.
- Once the needle is removed a small sterile dressing is applied

Risks -This is a very safe procedure with few risks:

1. **Allergic reactions to contrast materials.**
These are RARE . The commonest allergic reactions consist of an itchy skin rash which may take a few days to resolve completely.

Severe allergic reactions, including death, related to the contrast media we inject are VERY RARE and occur in 1in every 100,000 people. They usually consist of a severe asthma attack, difficulty breathing, or severe swelling of the face, mouth or airways. These serious reactions require emergency medical treatment, occur within an hour of the injection, and may require a period of observation in hospital before you are allowed to go home. They are MORE COMMON IF YOU HAVE OTHER ALLERGIES.

If you have had an allergic reaction to contrast injections given in conjunction with MRI, CT, or other X- ray procedures, the chance of another reaction is higher. You may require pre - medication in order to decrease your chance of a reaction or we may consider other alternatives which would not require contrast at all if we think the risk for you is too high. IT IS THEREFORE IMPORTANT THAT YOU TELL US OF ANY ALLERGIES OR REACTIONS YOU HAVE HAD IN THE PAST

2. **Infection in the joint.**

This is the most common and serious risk but is still RARE and we take every precaution with sterile technique in order to prevent it.. It happens to 1 in every 10 000 – 20 000 patients, and the risk is slightly higher in diabetics. If after the procedure, the joint becomes more painful, or red within the next few days to weeks or you develop a fever, chills or sweats, you must contact your local doctor or Emergency Department immediately. Tell them that you have had a joint injection. Early antibiotic treatment of joint infections is very successful and important in order to prevent complications.

After the procedure

You may need to be driven home by someone else. Avoid placing undue stress on the joint that has been injected for at least 24 hours

“Respect, communication, involvement”

The staff in Diagnostic Imaging want to make sure that you have understood the information that we have provided personally, as well as the information contained in the information sheet. We believe your understanding about why and how we are planning to assist you is very important.