

Trigger Point Injections

Patient Information

Pain Team

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What is a trigger point injection?

This is the name given to an injection of local anaesthetic and steroid to a particularly painful point in your body.

A trigger point injection is not a cure for the cause of your pain but it is used to help reduce the level of your pain.

Why are you getting it?

The doctor in the pain clinic has decided to offer you this treatment because it might help to decrease the amount of pain you are feeling in that area.

How does it work and what are the benefits?

The injection contains a mixture of local anaesthetic and steroid. It is thought to have the following beneficial effects:

- Local anaesthetics numb the area for a period of hours giving short-term relief.
- Local steroid has a long-term effect reducing inflammation in the area of the injection.

Side effects

There are only minimal effects on the rest of the body using local steroids by this route of administration. Any side effects are more likely to occur if steroids are given over a short period of time, for example raised blood pressure and weight gain.

You may feel as though the area that has been injected is a little bruised after the injection and you may experience an increase in the level of pain for a few days. This is normal, but it will quickly resolve and you can continue to take your normal painkillers for the pain that you have. Rarely a permanent indentation can be left in the skin where the steroid is administered (fat atrophy).

Diabetics may experience short-term problems with blood sugar control due to the steroids.

Alternatives

Your pain specialist will have discussed alternatives with you in your consultation. These could be medicines, different injections or physical therapies. Every patient is unique and therefore specific alternatives cannot be given on an information leaflet, as not all treatments are suitable for everyone.

What does the treatment involve?

A trigger point injection is performed as a day case procedure.

On the day of treatment please take all your routine medications. If you are taking any medication to thin your blood, such as Warfarin, or you have a blood clotting disorder please inform the doctor or the chronic pain nurse as soon as possible, as your medication may need to be stopped for 48 hours before the injection to prevent bleeding.

You may eat and drink as normal. You will be seen on the ward by one of the pain doctors who will explain the treatment and answer any questions that you may have. You will then be asked to sign a consent form for the treatment.

Shortly before the injection you will need to change into a hospital gown.

You will need to lie or sit in an appropriate position to allow the doctor to do the procedure. If you have any difficulty in getting into this position a member of staff will be there to help you. The skin over the area of your trigger point will be cleaned with antiseptic and the injection will then be given. There may be some discomfort at the time of the injection. Several trigger points may be injected in the same session.

You will have small plasters to cover the injection sites, which may be removed after 24 hours but do not worry if they should fall off sooner.

If the trigger point injection is helpful it may be repeated at the discretion of your consultant.

Risk of procedures performed during the time of the COVID-19 Pandemic

There may be additional risks to your health as a result of undergoing procedures to help manage your pain during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic which we cannot quantify at the moment.

If you are receiving a steroid injection, we have to make sure you are aware steroids can suppress your immune system, which in turn could make you more vulnerable to the Corona virus or any other infection. We do not know whether this is a true risk, and if there is a bigger risk of developing Corona virus infection, we do not know how big the risk is.

Often, deciding whether or not to have an injection is about weighing up how badly your pain symptoms are affecting your life and what risk you are willing to accept in order to alleviate the pain (bearing in mind that the procedure may not necessarily work or in the worst case scenario, might make you worse off than you were before the procedure). A pain injection may help your pain temporarily but at the cost of an increased chance of

developing Corona virus infection. The other risks of the procedure will remain unchanged from what they were before the start of the pandemic. Although there is no clear evidence in the literature that steroid injections can increase the likelihood of acquiring COVID-19 or increasing the severity, possible concerns have been raised regarding reduced survival benefit and possible harms. We know that complications and mortality related to COVID-19 are higher in some groups of people, particularly older people and those with comorbidities / health problems

We will not administer steroids if a person has COVID-19 infection, or if there is a possibility that he/she may have COVID-19, even if there are no symptoms at the time.

It has been suggested that a water soluble steroid may possibly be safer (e.g. Dexamethasone 3.3-13.2 mg); to avoid longer lasting systemic side effects, including suppression of the immune system. After the injections patients should self-isolate for seven days. If there are any concerns following an injection, patients can either contact the pain service on the provided telephone number (Monday-Friday 8am to 4pm) or you may have to attend the emergency department for further assessment.

Please also be aware that as this is a crisis situation, guidance and information can change very quickly and what we did a week ago may not necessarily be what we are doing today. Besides your normal procedure consent form, during the time of the pandemic we will ask you to complete an additional COVID-19 specific Patient Information and Consent Form. We would ask that you complete and return it as directed.

It is very important that you attend any appointments made for you with either, the Doctor, Nurse, Physio therapist, Occupational therapist or the Psychologist. If you cannot attend please cancel the appointment and re-arrange, failure to cancel will result in discharge from the pain service and you will need to be re referred by your GP if you wish to be seen again.

Will the steroid injection affect how well my COVID vaccine will work?

Currently there is no evidence to suggest that a steroid injection to a joint or soft tissue will reduce the effectiveness of a COVID vaccine. For a non-essential steroid injection, it should be delayed for 4 weeks after the vaccination and not be given within the 4 weeks before a vaccination. i.e. the steroid injection should not be given 4 weeks before or after the vaccination.

Where a patient has booked their injection appointment with the booking team and they subsequently are notified of their vaccination date , which falls within the 4 weeks either side of their steroid injection, they are advised to contact the booking team to rearrange their pain injection. Or contact their vaccine provider to discuss rearranging their vaccination appointment. Should patients not follow this advice they risk being cancelled on the day.

Contact information

If you have any questions please contact the Pain Management Team on:

01942 773099

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Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm)

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Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use and store the information we hold about you, please take a look at our “how we use your information” leaflet which can be found on the Trust website: <https://www.wwl.nhs.uk>

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille and other languages upon request. For more information please ask in the department/ward.

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