Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Injection of Therapeutic Substance into Joint

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Injection of a Therapeutic Substance into a Joint

Patient Information

Trauma & Orthopaedics

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What is a Therapeutic Liquid Injection?

An injection into a joint is used as a treatment for pain, most often caused by arthritis. Joint injections may be advised if painkillers in tablet form are not controlling pain. The type of injected medication used depends on the type of joint affected and the cause of the pain. Steroid injections are used to reduce inflammation of tissue which in turn reduces the swelling and pain in the joint. The effect of the steroid injection may not occur immediately and can take a number of days or weeks before the pain-relieving benefit is felt.

In some cases, a local anaesthetic may be used, which can block the nerve supply to the area, causing a numb, painless sensation. The benefit can be felt within 30 minutes of the injection being given. Local anaesthetics usually have a temporary effect. A steroid or local anaesthetic or a combination of both can be used. The doctor or healthcare practitioner will discuss this with you beforehand.

Benefits of a Joint Injection

Pain relief can be immediate or occur within a few days of the injection, depending on the type of injection you had.

Alternative to Joint Injection

There is no alternative but to continue with your current treatment.

The Joint Injection Procedure

The joint injection may take place in the operating theatre, ward, outpatient, or x-ray departments; this will be at the discretion of the Consultant’s team. In some cases e.g. spinal, foot and ankle, or hip injections are performed while an x-ray is taken of the area to be injected.

After the injection, a small dressing will be placed over the site.

Depending on the joint injected, you may be unable to drive after the procedure, so it may be necessary for you to arrange your own transport home.

It is advisable to rest the joint for 24 hours after the injection and to avoid strenuous exercise involving the joint.

If a steroid injection has been given, it may be necessary to take pain-relieving tablets until the injection begins to take effect.

The injection is not a cure for the pain felt in the joint. The degree of pain relief and the length of time it lasts vary from person to person. After a period of time, an injection may be repeated, but this decision will be at the discretion of the Consultant's team.

Complications

As with all procedures, there is a risk of complications, some minor but in rare cases serious and life-threatening.

Complications specific to this procedure include:

- Bruising at the injection site
- Septic arthritis
- Worsening of the pain which can be short-lived or prolonged
- Skin atrophy at the site of the injection
- Joint damage
- Reaction to injected therapeutic substance
- Underlying nerve or blood vessel damage

A member of the Consultant’s team will discuss the risks involved to you. If you are worried or unsure about any part of the procedure or your care, do not hesitate to discuss it with a member of the healthcare team.

Contact Telephone Numbers (Monday to Friday)

- Wrightington Hospital (Ward 1): 01257 256272 – 7am until 7pm
- D Ward: 01257 256269 – 7am until 7pm
- Orthopaedic Admissions Unit (OAU): 01257 256219 – 9am until 5pm
- Outpatient Department: 01257 256299 – 9am until 5pm



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