

CT-guided Facet Joint Injection:

Your doctor has referred you for a facet joint injection to help address the pain and/or numbness you have been experiencing in your back or neck.

WHAT IS A FACET JOINT INJECTION?

Facet joints are small joints at each segment of the spine that provide stability and help guide motion. The facet joints can become painful due to arthritis of the spine, a back injury, or mechanical stress to the back.

A facet joint injection involves a small injection of corticosteroid (or 'steroid') and/or a local anaesthetic which can numb the facet joints and block the pain. CT scanning is used to guide this injection so the radiologist can confirm accurate placement of the needle.

HOW IS A FACET JOINT INJECTION PERFORMED?

You will be asked to lie prone (on your stomach) on the CT scanning table. The skin on the back is then cleaned with antiseptic and the area is covered with a sterile drape.

Local anaesthetic is injected to numb the skin and deeper tissues of the back or neck. A fine needle is then passed into the appropriate area and a small amount of contrast media (x-ray dye) is injected to assess its position.

Once in the desired position, a mixture of a steroid and Marcain (a long acting local anaesthetic) will be injected into the facet joint. Steroids are used to reduce inflammation, which can sometimes provide longer-term pain relief.

A facet joint injection takes approximately 30 minutes, and you will also be asked to remain in the radiology department for about half an hour after the procedure.

BEFORE A FACET JOINT INJECTION:

- When you make your appointment for the nerve root injection, you need to let us know if you are taking any blood thinning medication, such as Warfarin. Aspirin is usually not stopped. Please continue with pain medication and other medications as usual.
- Please bring any related prior imaging with you.

AFTER A FACET JOINT INJECTION:

- You will be given a 'Pain Assessment' form to complete over the next 10 days.
- You may wish to bring someone with you to drive you home.
- **Please read the aftercare information on the reverse.** Although it is unlikely that you will develop any infection at the site of the injection, we ask that you monitor it for any signs of redness, inflammation or increasing pain. **If inflammation or redness does occur, you will need to contact either you GP or your referring doctor.**
- The radiologist will send a written report of the procedure to your referring doctor later in the day.

CT-guided Facet Joint Injection: CONTINUED

Aftercare

This injection contains a long-acting local anaesthetic and a steroid, and can temporarily affect your ability to stand and walk, or reduce the power in your upper limbs, depending on the area of your spine that has been injected. Your balance may also be affected.

It is important to rest for the next two days. The combination of these medications can mask pain that you would normally notice in your back or neck. Do not do anything that will put undue strain on the area that was injected. This includes heavy lifting, running, swimming, sports, going to the gym and even housework, such as making beds and hanging out washing, or any task requiring you to bend or use your arms.

The anaesthetic should have worn off the day after the injection.

Improvement can be gradual. Your symptoms can improve immediately, but often it is a gradual process. If your pre-injection pain returns in the first week, it does not mean the injection hasn't been successful; the steroid can take up to 2 - 3 weeks to start working.

The steroid will not fix the cause of your pain - its purpose is to reduce inflammation. Many people report alleviated symptoms for many months after the injection.

Although it is unlikely that you will develop an infection, we ask you to monitor the injection site for any signs of **redness, swelling or increased pain**. If you have any of these symptoms, or you if have **a fever**, please contact your GP, specialist or Ascot Radiology immediately.

Please complete the pain score chart to document your pain level over the next 10 days. Once completed, please return it to us in the stamped, addressed envelope. It is also a good idea to take a copy of the chart to your next specialist appointment.

Follow your specialist's recommendations and make an appointment with them to discuss further management of your symptoms.