

Chronic Pain Clinic

Facet Joint Injections

What is a facet joint injection?

The human spine is made up of a number of bones stacked on top of each other, supported by ligaments and muscles. These bones are called vertebrae. The little joints that link each vertebra together are known as facet joints. They help to stabilise your spine and allow movement.

Facet joints occur in pairs along the length of your spine. The ones that most often cause problems are in the neck (cervical facet joints) or the lower back (lumbar facet joints). There may be a problem with more than one set of joints due to wear and tear, injury, inflammation or previous disc problems.

A facet joint injection is an injection of local anaesthetic either directly into the joint or to the path of the small nerve which supplies sensation to the joint. It is usual to do several of these injections at one time.

Before the procedure

- You will have treatment as an outpatient at the Ely Day Surgery Unit or Addenbrookes Pain Clinic. This will be confirmed at your clinic appointment.
- You will have a morning or an afternoon appointment.
- On arrival, you will be asked to complete questionnaires.
- Your stay may be between two to four hours and before any treatment begins you will be asked to provide assurance that someone is able to drive you home if you are undergoing injections.
- You will then be asked to undress and put on a theatre gown. A doctor will then discuss the procedure with you and ask you to sign a consent form.

The procedure

- Once in the treatment room, you may have a small needle (Cannula) placed in the back of your hand. This allows the doctor to give you sedation if necessary.
- The procedure will be carried out under x-ray screening. This allows the doctor to identify the specific level of facet joints to be treated.
- The level of treatment is determined by where the pain is.
- Once you are lying in the correct position the doctor will clean your back with an antiseptic solution which can feel very cold.
- Needles are then inserted under x-ray control into the correct position. You may feel a pushing sensation or some discomfort at this stage.
- Once the needles are in the correct position local anaesthetic is injected. A feeling of tightness may be felt. You should let the doctor know if you feel pain.

Following the injection

- After the procedure you will be taken to the recovery area. You may feel a little drowsy and wish to sleep.
- The nursing staff will observe you and you may rest for about thirty minutes.
- When sitting up you will be offered light refreshment.
- You will then be free to go home.

Please ensure that you have arranged for someone to drive you home after this procedure. Failure to do so will result in your procedure being cancelled.

If you have had sedation, we recommend that you arrange for someone to stay with you overnight and that you do not drive for 24 hours.

Possible side effects

- Some patients experience mild local tenderness at the site of the injection. This usually settles over the next few days.
- Very rarely, the local anaesthetic may spread causing some numbness in your legs and other areas. This is temporary and will resolve.

What to expect afterwards

- Some people find that they get relief from their pain but, after a couple of months this wears off. Others may experience complete relief. However there is a chance that the pain will not improve, change, or will get worse.
- During the pain-free period you should try to gently increase your exercise. Simple activities like a daily walk, using an exercise bike or swimming on your back will help to improve your muscle tone and strengthen your back. The best way is to increase your activity slowly.
- Try not to overdo things on a good day so that you end up paying for it with more pain the following day.

Follow up

A letter will be sent to your GP and one of the nurses will telephone you in approximately four weeks.

Points to remember

- Please bring your glasses if you need them for reading
- Always bring a list of all current medication.
- Continue taking all your usual medication on treatment day.
- If there is any possibility you may be pregnant please inform the doctor or nurse.

Additional information

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. If you require more information or have any questions please speak to your doctor or contact the Pain Clinic.

Telephone number: 01223 217796



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. You cannot smoke on site. For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free, 0800 169 0 169

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Informacje te można otrzymać w innych językach, w wersji dużym drukiem lub audio. Zamówienia prosimy składać pod numerem: 01223 216032 lub wysyłając e-mail: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Polish

Se precisar desta informação num outro idioma, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio por favor telefone para o 01223 216032 ou envie uma mensagem para: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Portuguese

Если вам требуется эта информация на другом языке, крупным шрифтом или в аудиоформате, пожалуйста, обращайтесь по телефону 01223 216032 или на вебсайт patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Russian

若你需要此信息的其他語言版本、大字體版或音頻格式，請致電 01223 216032 或發郵件到: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Cantonese

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Turkish

এই তথ্য বাংলায়, বড় অক্ষরে বা অডিও টেপে পেতে চাইলে দয়া করে 01223 216032 নম্বরে ফোন করুন বা patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করুন।

Bengali

Document history

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