

Pain Service

Trigger Point Injections

What is a trigger point?

A trigger point is a tender point in a muscle which when pressed causes pain.

In its active state, a normal muscle is supposed to contract and relax. A trigger point is formed when the muscle fails to relax and a knot or tight ropey band of muscle is formed.

The trigger point can trap or irritate the surrounding nerves and cause pain to be felt in another part of the body.

What is a trigger point injection?

A trigger point injection is an injection of local anaesthetic and steroid into a trigger point.

Before the procedure

- You will have treatment as an outpatient at the Ely Day Surgery Unit, Addenbrookes Pain Clinic or the Addenbrookes Treatment Centre (ATC). This will be confirmed beforehand at your clinic appointment.
- You will have a morning or an afternoon appointment.
- Your stay may be between two to four hours. Before any treatment begins you will be asked to provide assurance that someone is able to drive you home.
- You will be asked to change into a theatre gown and your blood pressure and pulse will be recorded. Your doctor will then discuss the procedure with you and ask you to sign a consent form.

The procedure

This information leaflet is to be read in conjunction with the leaflet titled 'Advice to be read before your Pain Clinic injection treatment'.

- 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.

- Once you are lying in the correct position, the doctor will clean the area where you have painful muscle trigger points with an antiseptic solution which can feel very cold.
- The doctor will then lightly press on the area of painful muscle to identify where the specific trigger points are.
- Local anaesthetic and steroid is then injected into these trigger points which may briefly cause some discomfort but the area will soon go numb.

After the injection

- You will be taken to the recovery area where the nursing staff will observe you.
- You may feel a little drowsy and wish to sleep.
- You will remain lying down for 30 minutes and then be assisted to sit up. We will offer you some light refreshment.
- Your blood pressure and pulse will be checked frequently.
- Before you leave, the doctor will see you again and ask a few questions about your pain and any effects that the injection may have had.

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/risks

- Unfortunately, no procedure is risk free.
- Although long term side effects and complications are uncommon, they can occur.
- Infection is a theoretical risk but very rare.
- In some cases where a muscle near the ribcage is injected there is a risk for puncturing the lung but again this is very rare.
- You may have mild local tenderness and bruising at the site of the injection(s), which will usually settle over the next few days.

What to expect afterwards

- Some rapid relief of your pain may be noticed due to the local anaesthetic. It could take several days before the steroid becomes effective.
- Take your regular pain killers as normal.
- If this injection relieves your pain please remember that it is not a cure. **Do not** do strenuous activities immediately, but build up your activity level slowly.
- Simple activities like a daily walk or swimming will help to improve your muscle tone. The best way is to increase your activity slowly.

Follow up

A letter will be sent to your GP about your injection. You will receive an appointment for a telephone consultation with one of the Pain Clinic nurses. This telephone appointment will take place approximately 4 weeks after your injection.

Points to remember

- Please bring your glasses if you need them for reading.
- Always bring a list of all current medications.
- Continue taking all your usual medication on treatment day, unless you have been contacted and advised otherwise.
- 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 contact the Pain Clinic. (The number below is generally manned 0800 hrs – 1700 hrs Monday to Friday; there is an answer machine out of hours, please leave a message and we will return your call).

Telephone number: 01223 217796



We are currently working towards a smoke free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk



Document history

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