

CT Guided Facet Joint Injection

Patient Information

What is a Facet Joint Injection?

Facet joints are small joints between the vertebrae of the spine that provide stability and help guide motion. As with all joints, they can become painful as a result of arthritis, injury or mechanical stress.

An injection of cortisone into the facet joint may alleviate the pain by reducing inflammation of the joint.

This injection is performed by a Radiologist (Specialist Doctor) with the use of CT guidance to ensure correct needle placement.

What happens during a CT Guided Facet Joint injection?

You will be asked to change into a hospital gown and instructed to lay face down on the CT scanning bed.

A series of images will then be performed to accurately localise the region of interest.

The skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution to maintain a sterile technique and an injection of local anaesthetic is instilled just under the skin. This is usually the most uncomfortable part, with a sharp pin prick followed by some stinging.

Through this numb area, a thin needle will be guided into the correct position with the Radiologist working with the CT radiographer to ensure correct needle placement. Several more scans may be required, with the bed moving in and out of the CT scan machine each time.

Once correct needle placement is verified on CT, a combination of long-acting local anaesthetic and cortisone is injected into the joint. Following the injection, a simple sterile dressing is placed over the

site and you will be moved to our recovery area and observed for a short period to ensure you feel well.

Following consultation with the Radiologist, you will be able to leave. However you will require someone to drive you home.

What are the risks of a CT Guided Facet Joint Injection ?

This is a very safe procedure with low risks. The Radiologist will discuss the risks and obtain informed consent prior to the procedure taking place.

There may be slight soreness or bruising at the injection site, and some patients may experience temporary numbness around the injected area.

Rarely, people can be allergic to the injected medication. This is uncommon but you should advise the Radiologist of any allergies you have prior to the procedure.

Although a sterile technique is used, the procedure does carry a low risk of infection. Bleeding into the joint and joint infection are extremely rare. If any of the following symptoms are experienced within 2 weeks of the injection, please seek medical advice:

- Fevers or night sweats
- Worsening pain 5-7 days after the procedure
- Persistent or new weakness or numbness in the arms or legs.

Are there any post-procedure instructions ?

You must have a driver with you on the day. It is important to avoid strenuous activity for 3—5 days following the procedure.