

FACT SHEET:

CT Facet Joint Injection



What is a Facet Joint Injection?

This procedure involves an injection of local anaesthetic and steroid into the facet joints of the spine to provide ongoing pain relief. The procedure is conducted under CT guidance. The facet joints are sliding joints at the back of the spine which allow for mobility.

An injection into these joints is used to treat irritation or inflammation, often caused by facet joint degeneration. This degeneration can occur in isolation, or as a result of degenerative disc disease.

A facet joint injection can be diagnostic, to determine the pain source, or therapeutic, to provide ongoing pain relief.

Preparation for the procedure

There is no specific preparation required. If you are on any blood thinning medication (eg. Aspirin, Warfarin, Iscover, Plavix) please advise your referring doctor or High St Xray as these may need to be ceased before the procedure.

We recommend that you bring a responsible person to drive you home afterwards. If this is not possible we ask that you stay at the practice for 15-30 min for observation after the procedure. Please bring any prior scans (x-rays, ultrasounds, CT, or MRI's) and reports, as these will assist our Radiologist in assessing and effectively treating your condition.



Needle in facet joint



What are the risks and complications?

The risks of spinal procedures are rare, however they may include:

- Infection at the skin puncture site or deeper within the facet joint (1-2%). These can be serious with (<0.1%) requiring hospital admission.
- Bleeding can occur in patients with bleeding disorders and on 'blood thinning' medication.
- Allergic reaction any of the substances used during the procedure such as cortisone, dressing, local anaesthetic or antiseptic may cause an allergic reaction.

During the procedure

Spinal injection procedures are done with you lying face down on the CT scanner table. Once in this position we will ask you to remain as still as possible.

A series of planning images are performed, with the area of needle entry planned and then a mark will be placed on your skin. The Radiologist will then clean your skin with a cold antiseptic wash and inject local anaesthetic into the injection site.

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A fine needle is then passed through the skin and tissues, and is manipulated and moved under CT guidance until it enters the facet joint. The CT table will move in and out during this time to check the position of the needle. The doctor will then inject a mixture of Steroid and local anaesthetic into the facet joint. Some discomfort may be felt for a short time until the local anaesthetic numbs the area. A simple dressing will be applied to the injection site.

After the procedure

The effects of the treatment can vary. Immediately after the injection, your pain should be reduced due to the local anaesthetic. You will be able to walk immediately after the procedure.

Patients will be kept at High St Xray for approximately 15-30 minutes for observation and will be discharged after they are assessed by a member of staff.

After a few hours, your pain may return and some patients can experience a sore back for a couple of days. Simple paracetamol can help with this. You should start to feel some pain relief around 3-5 days after the injection.

Follow up

A follow up appointment with your referring doctor or health care provider is recommended to discuss your results of the procedure. We recommend you do this approximately 3 weeks following the procedure.

The Radiologist conducting the injection will send your referring doctor a report.

