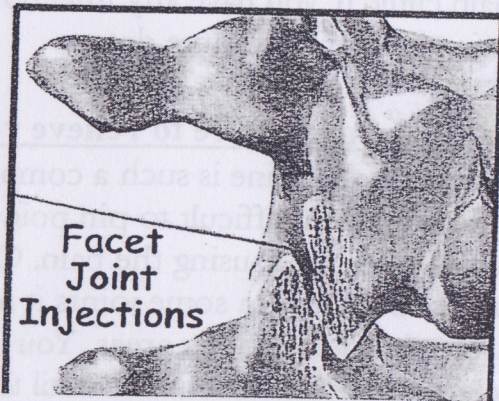


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Facet Joint Injection



What is a facet joint injection?

During a facet joint injection your doctor injects local anaesthetic plus a steroid into the facet joints that are causing pain. Facet joints are tiny joints about the size of your finger nail that join the vertebra together. Their main function is to allow movement of the vertebrae. These little joints are just as prone to injury or arthritis as any other joint in the body. The parts of the spine which move most are the most common areas to develop facet joint problems e.g. the Lumbar (low back), and the cervical (neck) areas. Initially the pain may be

experienced as an ache after standing for a while, but as time progresses the pain may be

there are two aims to injecting the joints,

1. The steroid helps to reduce inflammation within the joint thus reducing pain. The steroid is long acting, however it may take about 72 hours before it starts to work.
2. The second aim of the injection is diagnostic. This means that sometimes it is difficult to pin down exactly which joint is causing the problem, so if you get a good response from the injection then this means that this is the area causing the pain.

How is the injection performed?

It is important that you are awake for the procedure. This means that you will be able to tell the doctor how you feel during the procedure. A local anaesthetic will be given to numb the area for injection. This is rather like the local you get from your dentist, it may sting initially but should ease off after a moment.

You will be lying face down for the procedure. The injection will be done under X-Ray guidance. In this way the doctor can see exactly where the joints are to be injected. If you are female within childbearing age we will need to do a pregnancy test prior to the procedure because of the X-Ray exposure. For this reason you will be asked to bring in

a sample of urine on admission.

The injection consists of a mixture of 1-2 ml of local anaesthetic and 1-2 ml of steroid. It is injected slowly. You may feel a build up of pressure as this is injected, this is normal and will soon pass. If you feel a metallic taste in your mouth during injection, or feel unwell, inform your doctor.

What happens immediately after the injection?

After the injection you will be brought back to the ward on a trolley. Usually we will keep you lying for 20 minutes on the trolley, after which you will be given some tea and toast.

Once you are feeling well enough and able to walk unaided, you will be allowed home.

You must not drive at all on the day of the procedure, so you must arrange to have escort home after the procedure.

You should not walk without assistance for 6 hours after the procedure.

The pain management nurse usually rings all patients 1 week after the injection. If you have any worries or concerns during this period you can contact 061 467766.

It is important to rest after the injection for 24hrs, no excessive walking or lifting.