

Patient Information: Facet Joint Injection

What is a Facet Joint Injection?

Facet joints are joints in the spine that help to support weight and control the movement of the spine. The joints can become inflamed causing pain. A **steroid injection** into the facets joints can help to relieve the pain by reducing the inflammation.

What does it involve?

- You will be lying on your front for the procedure, which usually takes **10-20 minutes**. Local anaesthetic is injected into the skin and fine needles are passed toward the joints under x-ray guidance. Often more than one joint is injected.
- Once the needle is confirmed to be in the joint, the injection takes place.

What is Injected?

- **A small quantity of dye** (which can be seen on the xray images) is used to confirm that the injection is into the joint.
- **Local Anaesthetic** – injected into the joint.
- **Steroid** – injected into the joint

Patient Information: Facet Joint Injection

Does it Work?

The injection is used primarily to diagnose the source of your pain. The local anaesthetic numbs the joint so if the facet joint is the source of pain, you should experience significant pain relief within **15 minutes** of the injection, which may last for a few hours. Again, IF the facet joint is a source of pain then there may be some prolonged pain relief from the steroid which may last over **6 months** in about a quarter of patients. More often the pain returns within **days, weeks** or a **few months** after the procedure in which case it may be repeated or you may undergo a potentially longer lasting treatment called **radiofrequency denervation** or **rhizolysis**.

Risks and Side Effects:

Due to the procedure:

- Infection – rare.
- More discomfort for the first few days after your injection.
- Bruising to the injection area.
- Leg numbness and weakness are very rare side effects.
- Allergy to injected medication

Due to the injected steroid:

- Facial flushing for a few days.
- Temporary alteration of your usual menstrual cycle (females).
- Temporary increase in your sugar levels (diabetics).

Patient Information: Facet Joint Injection

What Happens on the Day of My Appointment?

- **You can eat and drink.**
- Take all your tablets as normal. Bring a list of your tablets with you.
- A nurse will take some details from you to check that you are fit for your procedure.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form. The doctor will be able to answer any questions you may have at this time.
- You will be at the Day Unit for about **1 - 2 hours**. This time may vary depending on unforeseen circumstances.
- After you have had your procedure, you will need to stay with us for about **30 minutes** before you can go home.

You must **NOT** drive home or go home on public transport.
Please arrange for someone to collect you from the Day Unit.
You are allowed to go home by taxi.

After Your Injection

- Take things easy for the rest of the day. Do not do any excessive exercise or heavy work for the first few days.
- Remove the dressing the next morning.
- Continue to take your pain tablets till you notice any improvement in your symptoms.

Patient Information: Facet Joint Injection

Important Information

Please inform the Day Unit if you are **diabetic**, have a **cough** or **cold** or have any kind of **infection**.

You must inform us if you are taking any of the following tablets – **antibiotics, aspirin, warfarin** or **clopidogrel** before attending as some of these may need to be stopped some days before.

Information for females - We will need to know the start date of your last menstrual period due to the use of x-ray equipment. If you think you might be pregnant, contact the Day Unit for advice.

Dr Robin Chakraverty

West Midlands Spinal Medical Clinic

Birmingham Nuffield Hospital

22 Somerset Road

Edgbaston

Birmingham

B15 2QQ

Nuffield Outpatients t: 0121 452 2810

Elizabeth Jones, Secretary to Dr Chakraverty **t:** 07919 38738