

TESTfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®



Ultrasound Guided Joint Injection (MSK Joint Injection)

What is an Ultrasound Guided Joint Injection (MSK Injection)?

A common cause of a painful joint is synovitis (inflammation of the lining of the joint). An injection of corticosteroid and/or local anaesthetic medication directly into the joint can sometimes be helpful in reducing the inflammation and providing pain relief. Reduction in pain may make physical therapy more effective.

How do you get ready for the test?

- Prior to your appointment please tell your doctor if you are allergic to any medications or if you are on blood thinners. Your dose might need to be held or your INR checked before injecting large weight bearing joints (i.e. knee or ankle).
- Please plan on arriving 30 minutes prior to your appointment. No children are allowed in the procedure room, so please plan accordingly to have your children cared for during the procedure.
- You do not need to do anything special before a joint injection. You may eat and drink as normal.
- It may be best to wear comfortable clothing with easy access to the joint being injected.

What is done during the test?

The joint injection is most often carried out using ultrasound to guide the injection. An X-ray or CTscan can be used depending on the joint to be injected and the method preferred by the radiologist (specialist doctor) who carries out the injection.

Generally a preliminary scan will be done to locate the exact point to be injected, which may be marked on your skin. The skin will then be cleaned with an antiseptic solution to prevent infection.

A needle will be placed into the joint either at the point marked on your skin or using the ultrasound to see the tip of the needle as it moves into the joint. If a CTscan or X-ray is used to guide the needle, then a small amount of contrast medium will be injected

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into the joint to provide clearer images and ensure the needle tip is correctly positioned.

Sometimes the radiologist may remove some fluid from the joint for analysis before giving the injection. The injection itself is usually a mixture of steroid and/or local anesthetic.

What are common side effects after the test?

You may experience more soreness in the joint after the injection, but may also feel better initially as a result of the local anesthetic. The anesthetic will generally wear off after a few hours and you may have more soreness in the joint than before the injection. This soreness may last for 2–3 days after the injection.

- Avoid strenuous activities (i.e. exercising, grocery shopping) after your injection.
- If the steroid part of the injection is going to reduce the pain and inflammation in the joint, this will usually start to occur between 3–5 days after the injection.
- If the pain becomes much worse in the days after the injection, this may indicate either an aggravation of the synovitis by the injection or very rarely an infection of the joint. If this occurs, contact your referring doctor or the emergency department of a hospital as soon as possible.

How do you get to your test?

On the day of your scheduled test, check in at the Front Desk. If you have questions before or during your test please call 303-398-1355. Also, if you need to cancel the appointment or change the time please call.

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