



Joint Injections

THIS LEAFLET AIMS TO ANSWER QUESTIONS AND HELP PATIENTS AND PARENTS/CAREGIVERS UNDERSTAND ABOUT JOINT INJECTIONS

What is a joint injection?

A joint injection is a common way to treat JIA. It involves an injection of a steroid into the joint space of an inflamed joint. This may be done under local anaesthetic or general anaesthetic.

Why do I need a joint injection?

Joint injections reduce inflammation and pain in swollen joints and improve movement. When there are only a couple of swollen joints this may be the only therapy you need. If you are on medicines already and still have swollen joints, joint injections may save having to increase their doses or change them.

Will it hurt?

Entonox (laughing gas) plus other things such as numbing cream, paracetamol and distraction are used to help with the pain. You will be taught how to breathe the gas which helps relieve the pain. In some cases when many joints are involved you may require a general anaesthetic. For this you will be asleep, so won't feel a thing.

How effective is this treatment...and how long will it last?

Most children and young people respond very well to joint injections with relief of swelling and pain in a short period of time. The amount of improvement and how long it lasts varies from person to person. Most people will notice improvement and remain free of arthritis symptoms for months. Only a very small number of people do not respond to this treatment at all.



Preparation for a joint injection with inhaled Entonox

*No eating or drinking for at least two hours before the procedure.

*Loose clothing should be worn so the joints can be easily accessed.

*Being very unwell or sick with a temperature may mean the procedure may need to be postponed.

*Bring a book, magazine or some music to listen to.

Are there any complications?

There are possible side effects from a joint injection, but these are usually not serious and are very rare. These include:

- **Generalised flushing** of the skin
- **Fainting** (caused by stimulation of the vagal nerve)
- **Allergic reaction** - safety measures are in place to deal with these if they occur
- **Subcutaneous skin atrophy** - at the site of injection skin or fat atrophy can appear as a dimple or indentation at the point where the needle went in. Occasionally the same area can lose its normal skin colour as well. These skin changes usually recover over time and do not cause pain or loss of function.
- **Pericapsular calcification** - with repeated injections there can be a buildup of calcium around the joint or into the surrounding tissue
- **Bleeding or Infection of the joint** is serious but very rare. Special precautions are taken to avoid this, such as cleansing the skin carefully before injecting and using a different needle for every joint. If you develop symptoms such as increased pain, redness, swelling and/or fever please see your GP as soon as possible.

Will my child need a general anaesthetic?

Children under five or those who are having multiple joint injections usually have these done under general anaesthetic. If the joint injection is to be done this way an admission to the daystay unit will be arranged and you will be contacted by the orthopaedic or radiology team about date and time. You will also receive instructions that will include advice food and fluid restrictions prior to the procedure.



Precautions after a joint injection

It is recommended that you rest for 24 hours after a joint injection. After this time normal activity can be resumed.

A small proportion of people can experience pain in the joints after the injection, but this should settle down in a day or two.

If necessary an ice pack may be used along with Paracetamol and your usual non-steroidal anti-inflammatory such as Ibuprofen (Brufen or Nurofen) or Naproxen. Sometimes other pain medication is needed such as codeine or tramadol.

The Rheumatology team will make a follow-up appointment in 6-7 weeks after the joint injection to review how you are doing.



Preparation for a joint injection with sedation or general anaesthetic

*No food for 6 hours prior and no clear fluids for 4 hours prior.

*Being very unwell or sick with a temperature is likely to mean the procedure will be postponed – please contact the service to discuss.

*Recovery time after a general anaesthetic is a minimum of 4 hours.