

CT Guided Spinal Injections provide temporary relief from back and neck pain. They may also help to determine the exact cause and source of pain and can therefore be used to help a surgeon know which area of your spine to operate on, if surgery is required.

No sedation or general anaesthetic is required for this procedure.

Is there any preparation for the procedure?

Have nothing to eat for 4 hours before the procedure.

You may drink normal fluids until the time of the procedure.

Take 2 Panadol (or similar) one hour before the procedure – this helps to reduce stinging from the local anaesthetic, this is optional.

Please wear comfortable / loose clothing.

If you wear reading glasses, please bring these with you.

Can I take my usual medications?

Radiology booking staff will phone you and ask about blood thinning medications.

Some of these may need to be stopped before the procedure. If these medications are not stopped the procedure may need to be delayed.

Continue to take all your other usual medications.

What happens during the procedure?

You will need to lie on your stomach, side or back depending which area of your spine is being treated.

The treatment area will be 'painted' with an antiseptic wash, this can be cold.

A local anaesthetic is then injected, initially this stings, but it will numb the skin and deeper tissues.

CT scans are taken to help the doctor guide the spinal needle into the correct position.

Once the needle is in position, some medications will be injected.

The medications used depend on the exact procedure you are having, but will include some or all of the following:

- X-ray contrast (dye) to outline structures in and around your spine
- A long lasting, slow acting local anaesthetic to prevent or block pain
- A long lasting corticosteroid to reduce inflammation and pain

The procedure usually takes ½ an hour but at times may take up to an hour.

What happens after the procedure?

You will be asked to wait in the Radiology Department for ½ an hour after the procedure. If the procedure is difficult or if you experience any adverse symptoms this time may be extended, very rarely you may need to stay overnight in hospital.

You may experience numbness, tingling or weakness in your legs or arms. This should clear up within a few hours.

Once the local anaesthetic wears off, there may be an initial increase in your pain, this should settle over 2-3 days.

The corticosteroid injection takes 2-3 days to start working and up to 3 weeks to have its best effect.

After 3 weeks you are unlikely to notice any further improvement.

The injection usually lasts for 2-3 months, much longer for some patients.

It is important to note that any pain relief gained varies from person to person but most people will notice an improvement in their symptoms.

We ask you not to return to work or drive for 12 hours after the procedure.

Please arrange for someone to drive you home after the procedure.

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You may resume a normal diet after the procedure is completed.

You may restart normal activities the following day.

You may need to keep a “pain diary” after the procedure.

Are there any risks?

CT Guided Spinal Injections are generally safe procedures but as with all medical procedures there are risks. If complications occur they are usually mild. Severe complications can occur but these are rare.

Risks / complications of the procedure:

- No improvement of your symptoms
- Bleeding
- Infection
- Injury to a nerve or blood vessel
- An allergic reaction to any injected medications

Before the procedure starts you will be given an explanation of the procedure by the Radiologist (Radiology Doctor) performing your procedure.

Any questions that you have will be answered at this time.

If you wish to have the procedure performed you will be asked to sign a consent form.

Consent for the procedure

You (or power of attorney/legal guardian if appropriate) will need to sign the consent form. No other person can sign this form for you.

You have the right to refuse this procedure, ask for additional information or have an alternative staff member perform your procedure.

Are there alternatives to this procedure?

Alternatives include oral pain and anti-inflammatory medications.

However most people recommended for a spinal injection have already tried these without improvement.

Comments / Complaints

If you have any comments or suggestions please tell one of the staff before you leave, or you can contact the Consumer Experience Facilitator on 04 806 0724

General

There are no lockable facilities in Radiology. We strongly recommend that any valuables are left at home.

Please be aware that CCDHB does not take responsibility for any loss or damage of personal property belonging to patients whilst on CCDHB premises

You must seek urgent medical treatment after the procedure if you experience:

- ongoing / increasing pain that does not settle after 2-3 days.
- ongoing / increasing bleeding at the injection site.
- any symptoms such as limb weakness, neck stiffness or altered sensation in areas that does not settle after 2-3 days.
- onset of other symptoms soon after the procedure such as ongoing headache, nausea, vomiting or fever.

For emergencies call 111 or contact your:

- local After Hours Centre
- local Hospital Emergency Department