

What is a joint injection?

A common cause of a painful joint is inflammation. It can be useful to inject corticosteroid and/or local anaesthetic medication directly into the joint to reduce the inflammation and provide pain relief.

Sometimes x-rays are needed to direct the injection to the correct place.

This procedure is most often used in the shoulder and hip but may also be helpful in other joints such as the joints of your hands and feet.

Sometimes this injection does not provide relief to your pain. Although this may be disappointing to you, it can provide very useful information for your doctor by eliminating one of the reasons for this pain.

Who is in the room during this procedure?

- A Radiologist or Radiology Registrar (a fully qualified doctor who is specialising to become a Radiologist)
- Medical Radiation Technologist/s (MRT)
- There may also be a student MRT assisting the MRT during the procedure.

You are welcome to bring a support person along to your appointment, however as this procedure involves the use of x-rays we recommend that they wait in the waiting/ changing room during the procedure.

How do I prepare for a joint injection?

You do not need to do anything special before a joint injection. You may eat and drink as normal.

What happens during a joint injection?

The MRT will bring you into a changing cubicle and may ask you to change into a hospital gown.

The doctor will explain the procedure to you and will ask you to sign a consent form to confirm that you understand the procedure. Please tell the doctor if you are allergic to any medications.

You will be asked to lie on the examination table.

The Fluoroscopy machine will be moved into position, and the doctor will use live x-ray images as a guide to find the best place to inject.



Then they will draw on your skin with a marker pen. It is important not to move once you have been positioned.

If you are having a hip joint injection, the doctor may also feel for a pulse in your groin and mark where this is.

This will assist the doctor to avoid the needle touching any of the blood vessels and nerves that supply your leg.

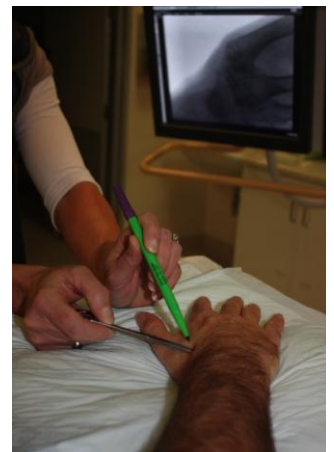
With the assistance of the MRT the doctor will prepare the things that are needed for the injection.

After cleaning your skin they may numb the area by injecting some local anaesthetic. This will sting a little.

Marking the skin prior to a wrist joint injection

A needle will be inserted into the joint at the point marked on your skin or using X-rays to see the position of the needle as it moves into the joint.

A small injection of X-ray dye may be used to confirm that the needle is in the joint. The whole procedure should take around 30 minutes.



[continued]



Fluoroscopic image confirming correct needle position with contrast (X-ray dye) in the hip joint

What happens after a Joint Injection?

You may experience more soreness in the joint after the injection but may also feel better initially as a result of the local anaesthetic.

The anaesthetic 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.

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 you have a hip joint injection you may experience numbness of your leg, this is very rare and will wear off after a couple of hours. However because of this, we advise that you do not drive for 2-3 hours after the procedure. Please arrange for someone to pick you up, alternatively, you may use public transport.

Some patients find that the injection gives them good pain relief for a few months.

What is a pain diary?

A pain diary is a useful tool for you to share with your referring doctor to confirm that a joint injection has been effective.

Think about your level of pain on the morning of the procedure and note down how it feels on a scale of 0 to 10 this is a good gauge, where "0" is no pain and "10" is excruciating pain.

It's a good idea to keep this pain diary for the month following your joint injection, or until you next see your referring doctor.

What are the risks of a Joint Injection?

This is a very safe procedure with few risks.

- There is a very small risk of infection, which is very small and probably lies between 1 in 10,000 and 1 in 75,000 injections performed. The procedure should not be performed if there is broken skin or infection overlying the joint, or if the joint may already be infected.
- As with any drug, occasionally people are allergic to the injected medication. The exact risk of this is not known but it seems to be very uncommon. You should advise your referring Doctor and the Doctor performing the Joint Injection of any allergies you may have.
- All x-ray examinations involve exposure to radiation in varying amounts. The length and level of exposure to radiation from x-rays in medical procedures is strictly controlled and kept to the minimum possible

How do I find out the results of this procedure?

The radiologist will not be able to provide a result immediately.

They will study the images obtained and will write a formal report and send the results to the doctor that referred you for this test. A copy will also be sent to your GP.

Results are usually available to your doctor within 2 weeks.

Where can I go to find more information?

If you have any further questions contact the radiology admin team using the contact details below and they will arrange for an MRT to call you back.

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.

Contact us

Phone: (04) 806 2193 ask for Fluoroscopy bookings

Hours: 8am-4pm, Monday to Friday

Fax: (04) 806 0301

Email: radiology.admin@ccdhb.org.nz

please include the word "Fluoroscopy" in the subject line