

Joint Injection

What is joint or soft tissue injection?

A joint injection is the insertion of a needle into the joint space to either remove fluid or to administer medications directly into the joint.

This procedure may also be done to soft tissues such as tendons or bursae (structures around a joint).

Why do I need this procedure/surgery?

You may need this procedure to help find out the cause of your symptoms by testing the fluid within the joint. It may also help your symptoms by removing fluid.

Administered medication such as steroids may also help reduce inflammation within the joint or surrounding tissue. The effects may last weeks to months.

What are the preparations?

Inform your doctor if you are allergic to any medications.

You should also inform your doctor if you are taking any blood thinners, if you have underlying diabetes or if you had surgery to the joint before.

If medication is administered into the joint, you are advised to refrain from heavy lifting or strenuous activity for the next 48 hours.

How is the procedure/surgery performed?

The procedure is performed by trained doctors under sterile conditions. The target joint is cleaned before local anaesthesia or a cold spray is administered to help numb the area and reduce pain. A needle is then introduced into the joint space. Fluid is removed where applicable and medications administered where needed. The needle is then removed and a plaster is applied over the injection site.

What are the risks and complications of the procedure/surgery^?

- Infection: <0.1%
- Bleeding: Rare
- Nerve, ligament, cartilage injury: <1%
- Tendon rupture: <1%
- Post injection flare*: 2-15%
- Flushing reaction*: <1%
- Local skin atrophy/hypopigmentation*: <1%
- Systemic absorption of steroid*: Uncommon

*If intraarticular steroids administered

^Reference:

- American College of Rheumatology
- EULAR recommendations for intra-articular therapies



What would I expect after the procedure/surgery?

You may expect some discomfort post procedure. These may be relieved with an ice pack or paracetamol. It should be minor and short-lived. However, if there is increasing pain, swelling, redness, or fever then there may be an infection. Do inform your doctor if this occurs.

What are the options?

You may be offered physiotherapy, painkillers or an adjustment to existing medications to control your underlying medical condition.

What will happen if I do not undergo the procedure/surgery?

You may not get relief of joint discomfort or your doctor may have difficulty with confirming your diagnosis if the joint fluid is needed for analysis.

Certain conditions such as infection of the joint carry high risk of complications if undetected and untreated.

Others (to be filled by Medical Practitioner) :

Contributed by Rheumatology, Department of Medicine

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