

Patient Information

CT Guided Cervical Facet Injection

What is a facet injection?

Facet joints are the connection between the vertebrae which help to guide your spine's movement. Facet injection is an injection of a combination of local anaesthetic and anti-inflammatory drug (steroids) into this joint. The aim of the injection is twofold. Firstly, if your pain is relieved by the numbing medicine (local anaesthetic) then it confirms that this joint is the cause of your pain. Secondly, the anti-inflammatory medicine (steroid) will reduce the surrounding inflammation and hence your symptoms.

Preparation

No preparation is required although it is important to contact us and let us know if you are taking any blood thinning medications or have an iodine allergy prior to the appointment.

We require you to come with **someone to assist you and drive you home after the procedure**. Public transport is not acceptable. *Should your circumstances be that you do not have anyone to accompany you, please contact us immediately to discuss.*

How long will it take?

The procedure usually takes about twenty (20) minutes.

What to expect

The injection will be performed by a radiologist who will be assisted by our radiographers. You will be asked to change into a gown and lie face down on the CT table. A series of planning scans will be taken so that the exact position for the injection can be marked on your neck.

The skin will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution and the radiologist will inject the area with a local anaesthetic to numb the region and then a short series of scans are performed to confirm the injection will go into the correct point for maximum relief. Once the correct position has been acquired, the anti-inflammatory and the local anaesthetic agent will be injected.

After Your Examination

The injection may give you immediate relief to symptoms, although for other patients this relief may take up to a week to occur.

For your comfort it is recommended you:

- Take it easy for the next forty-eight (48) hours
- Resume your normal activities as limited by pain
- You may apply ice to the affected area
- You may continue with physiotherapy etc.

It is important to keep a record of your progress so we have provided a 'Post Procedure Pain Diary' for you to keep over the next two (2) weeks after the procedure. You should take this with you to report back to your doctor when you next see them so they can assess how successful this procedure was for you.

Any beneficial effect may eventually wear off. This is very variable, but the beneficial effect usually lasts several months. The area can be injected again if required.

Possible Side-Effects and Complications

In general, this is a very safe procedure, but there are some potential complications that may occur.

The main ones include:

- Sharp pain, which may go down your arm. This settles very quickly. **Is this correct for facet?**
- Some patients may have some numbness or weakness in the arm (similar to injections at the dentist) and this will disappear over a couple of hours.
- **The injection may irritate the joint further and the symptoms may be aggravated for a day or so before the steroid starts having its effect.**
- **Bruising of the skin or bleeding into the soft tissues or joint.**
- **Increased blood sugar levels in diabetics.**
- Unfortunately, some patients have no relief of symptoms.

Rarer complications may include:

- Allergic reaction.
- Infection at the needle site or within the neck.
- Bleeding at the needle site
- Local skin discolouration, local loss of pigment, or skin contour change at the site of injection. This may last months or be permanent.
- Facial redness, which occurs over the next twenty-four (24) hours, that is a side effect of the steroid medication, it settles over the next twenty-four (24) to forty-eight (48) hours. You may also feel restless, irritable in your mood and have some difficulty sleeping for 1-2 days.
- In exceptionally rare circumstances, serious complication may include damage to blood vessels that supply the brain (stroke) or damage to the spinal cord.

Questions?

You will be given the opportunity to ask any questions of the technicians or radiologist at the time of your procedure, however if you have any queries prior to the appointment, please feel free to contact us by phone or email – 02 9170 4500 or contact@nsrnm.com.au

If you have any questions regarding **why** the injection is required, these should be directed to your specialist or the doctor looking after you. We are happy to re-schedule your booking so you can discuss it with your doctor.

