

What are the risks and side effects associated with the procedure?

Common side effects

- Bruising to the injected area.
- Facial flushing for a few days.
- In women short term alteration to your usual menstrual cycle.
- A short term increase in your blood sugar levels if you suffer with diabetes, this may make your diabetes more difficult to manage for a few days.
- Repeated use of corticosteroids can cause osteoporosis.

Less common side effects

- Increased pain for several days.
- Permanent increased pain.
- Allergy to injected medication.
- Temporary leg weakness.
- Permanent nerve damage, leading to weakness or paralysis; this is very rare.

Important information



Please inform the admission office on 01803 656031 if you have

- Any form of infection that requires you to take antibiotics.
- If you are taking antibiotics, Aspirin, Warfarin, Clopidogrel, Rivaroxaban or Dabigatran **before attending**. Some of these may need to be stopped some days prior to your appointment.

South Devon Healthcare 

NHS Foundation Trust



**PATIENT
INFORMATION**

Facet joint injections and Medial Branch Block Injections

What are facet joints?

The facet joints (also called zygoapophyseal joints) are pairs of small joints that connect the vertebrae (back bones) throughout the length of the spine. They protect the spine when moving.

What is a facet joint injection?



A facet joint injection is an injection of local anaesthetic (this temporarily numbs the nerves) and steroids (this reduces inflammation) into a facet joint.

Why have I been offered these injections?



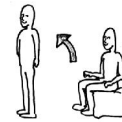
Pain can come from wear and tear in the facet joints. The mixture of local anaesthetic and steroid should work on the nerve supplying these joints and help reduce the pain and inflammation from the facet joint.

What will happen on the day?

You may eat and drink as normal unless your hospital letter states otherwise. Take all your tablets at the normal times, **apart from medication such as Warfarin, Clopidogrel, Rivaroxaban or Dabigatran** as these may need to be stopped beforehand. You should be informed at your outpatient appointment if you need to stop these drugs. If your GP prescribes any of the above medication between your outpatient appointment and your injection ring the admission office on 01803 656031 to inform the consultant. You will not need to get undressed but if you could wear loose fitting clothing such as tracksuit clothing so that the skin can be easily exposed.

You will be lying on your front for the procedure, which usually takes 10-20 minutes. Your skin will be cleaned with alcohol that will feel very cold. Local anaesthetic is injected to numb the skin and can sometimes sting. An x-ray machine is used to help with the correct placement of the needle (for female patients you may be asked if there is any chance that you could be pregnant prior to having x-rays). Often, several joints are injected so you may have several injections. If the injections do not work then we know that the facet joints are not causing your pain.

What happens after the procedure?



After the procedure you will need to stay in the department for thirty minutes or so, until you are able to walk and are fit for discharge.



You must be collected from the unit you will not be allowed to travel home by bus or train.



You will be given a discharge letter explaining what injection you have been given and a pain diary to fill in. You will be told how to fill this in during your appointment; this will help the consultant decide what happens next.



Continue to take your pain tablets until you notice some improvement.



After your injection take things easy for the rest of the day. Do not do any hard exercise or heavy work for the first few days.