Fact sheet

Injection guided by CT, ultrasound or X-ray

This fact sheet tells you what an injection guided by computed tomography (CT), ultrasound or X-ray is, and what is involved. Please read this sheet before having your procedure. If you have any questions, ask your doctor.

What is CT-, ultrasound- or X-ray-guided injection?

This procedure uses CT, ultrasound or X-ray imaging to find the correct area where the injection should be given. For example, it can be used to help in finding the joint or soft tissue into which a corticosteroid (steroid-type medicine) or local anaesthetic needs to be injected to reduce inflammation and provide pain relief.

This procedure is most often used in the shoulder, knee, hip and spine.

What is involved?

You do not need to do anything special before an injection: you may eat and drink as normal, **but you should tell your doctor and the imaging staff if you have allergies, are pregnant or think you might be pregnant.**

You may need to have contrast injected to highlight the area (see *Iodinated contrast* fact sheet).

It is best to wear comfortable clothing with easy access to the area being injected.

What happens after the injection?

A radiologist (a specialist doctor) assesses the images and gives the results to your referring doctor. You will be kept in the imaging department for around 30 minutes to one hour, and then allowed to go home with care instructions.

Some people find that the injection gives them good pain relief for a few months, but then the pain usually comes back.

Sometimes it can be difficult for your doctor to know exactly what is causing your pain, so the injection may not improve your symptoms. Although this may be disappointing, it can be helpful to your doctor because it means that another cause of the pain needs to be considered.

Are there any risks?

This is generally a safe procedure. There is a small risk of infection and only few other risks.

Although the exact risk of multiple injections is not known, most doctors would advise against injections more than three to four times a year to avoid damage to the joint.

The dose of radiation used in a CT or X-ray scan is generally small and rarely produces harmful effects. If you have many CTs, there is a slight increase in the lifetime risk of cancer.

Contrast medium may be used if the injection is done using CT or moving X-rays (fluoroscopy), and this has some risk (see *Iodinated contrast* fact sheet).

For more information

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