

What Is a Facet Joint Injection

Sometimes back pain comes from the small joints in the back known as the articular facet joints. Your doctor has requested a facet joint injection, which is performed in the X-Ray Department. It is an injection of both a local anaesthetic and a steroid into these joints.

What Happens Before the Procedure

You need to **fast from solids and liquids for 4 hours** before the procedure.

If you take **Warfarin, Plavix, Iscover, Clopidogrel** or other blood thinning agents, notify the booking staff as this may require cessation or blood tests prior to the procedure.

A nurse will go through a checklist with you prior to the procedure. Questions relating to allergies, past medical history and your understanding of the procedure will be discussed.

Notify the nurse and doctor of any:

- Allergies, especially iodine as the contrast medium may cause a reaction.
- If you are or may be pregnant, due to the use of x-ray imaging.

What Happens During the Procedure

- You will be dressed in a hospital gown and lie face down on an x-ray table. With the aid of a television screen X-ray picture or CT scan, you will be placed in the correct position.

- It is important that you do not move from that position.
- Your back will be cleansed with antiseptic solution. A small amount of local anaesthetic is injected into your skin - this stings for a short while.
- Then the needle is placed into the correct position and more local anaesthetic is injected into the joint itself. An X-ray picture is taken at this time.
- The procedure takes 10-20 minutes

What Happens After the Injection

- As your doctor needs to know whether the injection has been successful, you should resume all normal activities, if possible, within a few days of the injection.
- You will be asked to chart to fill in to record the amount of pain relief you have on a chart, which is given to you by the nursing staff.

You should contact the doctor who referred you for the procedure, within 2-6 weeks so that the success of the injection can be gauged. Take the completed pain chart you have filled in to that consultation so the referring Dr can study it.

- **You are not able to drive yourself home so, please organise a driver to bring you to and from the procedure.**

Risks

Complications are very rare, however you need to be informed of the potential risks.

Risks include:

- Pain or discomfort at the needle insertion site; bleeding at the site or into deeper tissues.
- Risks associated with the x-ray contrast medium, including nausea, rash, itchiness and swelling. If you experience any of these symptoms please inform your nurse or doctor. Very severe reaction is rare and a life threatening reaction is extremely rare.
- Infection involving redness, swelling or increased pain over the injection site developing over 3-5 days. Chills or fever with increasing back pain occurring a few days following the procedure should be reported to your referring doctor or GP.
- Any procedure potentially can be rarely associated with unpredictable risks including death.
- The procedure may not help your pain and you will need to discuss with your doctor other options.

Seek Medical Advice if you have:

- Persistent headache.
- Prolonged nausea and vomiting.
- Weakness or loss of strength in your lower limbs.

Any Concerns contact:

- Your GP or specialist
- NIISwa:
Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
(08) 9346 4455
Royal Perth Hospital
(08) 9224 1069
- Or the Emergency Department via switchboard on:
Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
(08) 9346 3333
Royal Perth Hospital
(08) 9224 2244



NEUROLOGICAL INTERVENTION & IMAGING SERVICES WA (NIISwa)

PATIENT INFORMATION

FACET JOINT INJECTION

**NIISWA – Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
1st Floor G Block (access via Gold Lifts)
Phone (08) 9346 4455**

**NIISWA – Royal Perth Hospital
3rd Floor Imaging Services North Block
Phone (08) 9224 1069**