

Steroid Joint Injections under General Anaesthetic

Information for young people



Leeds children's
hospital

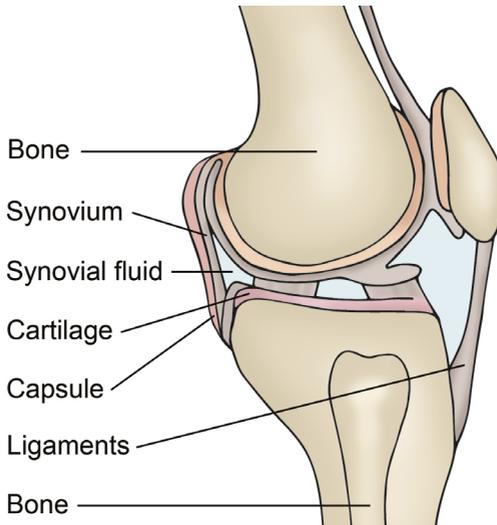
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What is a Joint Injection?

A joint injection is a treatment that is used for Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (J.I.A). It means that your doctor will insert a small needle into the joint space (the space between the bones in a joint) and inject medicine. This may be done with you awake using laughing gas (Entonox) or under general anaesthetic, where an anaesthetist puts you to sleep for a short while. Most young people notice that the joint is a lot less sore and swollen within a few days of the injection. Injections can make joints feel better for weeks, months or even longer.

Why do I need a joint injection?

Joint injections reduce inflammation and pain in swollen joints. If you have only one or a few joints swollen, they may be the only treatment you need, with occasional repeated injections. If you are taking other medicines already and still have swollen joints, joint injections may save having to increase the doses or introducing new ones.



What will happen when I get a joint injection?

Before the joint injection:

- You will not be able to eat or drink for some time before your joint injection, this will be explained in the appointment letter. It is very important to follow this, otherwise, the procedure could be cancelled
- Wear loose clothes that can be pulled up to uncover the joint(s) that need to be injected
- A nurse on the ward will ask you some questions about your health and take your temperature & blood pressure. She / he will also apply some local anaesthetic cream (numbing cream) to your hand or arm to allow the anaesthetist to insert a cannula (a little plastic straw for anaesthetic medicines and fluids) when you get to theatre
- Please avoid vaccines for 48 hours before being admitted. Immunisations can be given at any time after the joint injections
- The anaesthetist will visit you on the ward before the procedure to take a medical history and your joints will be examined again by the rheumatologist who will perform the joint injections in theatre. Written consent on a standard form will be taken, usually from your parent and from yourself if you want to
- When it is time for you to have your joint/s injected, one parent can go with you into the theatre and stay with you while a cannula is inserted, or while you start breathing gas through a mask or mouth piece (depending on how you are being put to sleep). They will say goodbye to you once you are asleep and will wait for you in an area close by

During the anaesthetic:

- The anaesthetist and assistant will care for you all the time you are asleep.
- The doctor will clean the skin around the joint with an alcohol swab or spray.
- A needle attached to a syringe is inserted into the joint. You will be asleep and will not be able to feel this and will not remember it.
- The doctor will sometimes pull some fluid from the joint into the syringe. The fluid is yellow. Sometimes, there is a bit of blood mixed in. This is normal.
- Without taking the needle out, the doctor will take off the syringe with the fluid in it and connect another syringe with medicine in it. The steroid medicine is injected into the joint.
- The needle is then taken out and a small plaster put on. The whole injection takes about 5 minutes.
- If you need another joint injection, the doctor will do it straightaway while you are still asleep.
- When you wake up again, the injection(s) will have been done and you will not remember anything about the procedure.

What is injected into the joint?

A long lasting steroid which stays in the joint space for over 1 week. Sometimes, a local anaesthetic is also added to the steroid medicine.

After the injection:

The general anaesthetic can make your mouth feel dry. Some children feel a little sick, whilst others are sleepy for a while.

A drink of juice or water is nice and is available on the ward for you to drink when you are fully awake after the injection. Once you have fully recovered from the anaesthetic, have had something to drink and have passed urine, you will be ready to go home with your parents.

For 24 hours after the injection, you need to avoid using the joint too much, which may involve resting, depending on which joint(s) is / are involved.

After this, you should be able to go back to school and resume normal activities such as taking part in P.E, etc. If a joint has not been used much recently, muscles can ache if you suddenly return to full activity so a gradual return is sensible.

If your joints have become stiff or the surrounding muscles have become weak, you may need to meet with a physiotherapist within a couple of weeks of the joint injection. Your doctor will let you know if this is advised and will arrange it.

Are there any side-effects of Steroid Joint Injections?

There are a few possible side-effects from a joint injection but these are not serious.

- The injected joint can ache for a day or two. This should settle.
- Steroid can thin the fat tissue under the skin causing a little dimple or make the overlying skin go a little pink. This is rare and is mainly seen at wrists, ankles and fingers. If it does happen, it doesn't hurt and doesn't cause any problem apart from the appearance. It heals with time but this can take several months.
- Infection of the joint is a potential risk but is very unlikely and happens very rarely. Special precautions are taken to avoid this such as cleaning the skin carefully before injecting. Signs of infection are redness and swelling of the joint, feeling unwell and a high temperature.

How is JIA treated?

Your treatment is planned just for you - it may be different for another person. This is because JIA affects each young person differently.

The main ways of treating JIA include:

- medications to control inflammation;
- steroid joint injections to reduce inflammation in particular joints;
- exercises to keep joints moving well and muscles strong; and
- pain management strategies to reduce pain and help you cope with pain.

Contact details

Please feel free to contact the Paediatric Rheumatology Nurses on:

Tel: **0113 3920683**

(answer phone if we are not around to answer)

or email us @: leedsth-tr.PRNurses@nhs.net

Children's Ward: Tel: **0113 3927449**



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