

Steroid Joint Injections using Entonox (laughing gas)

Information for young people



Leeds children's
hospital

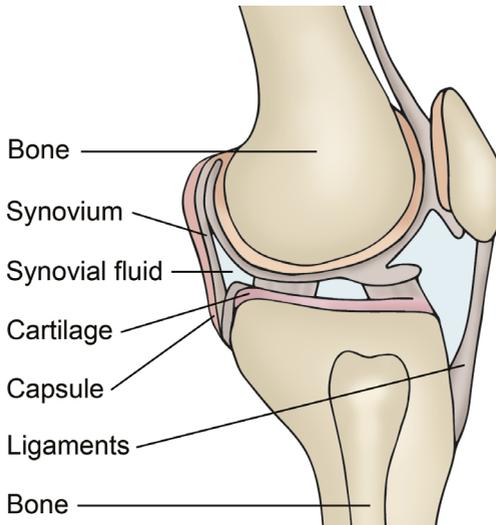
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What is a joint injection?

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 (another doctor) 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 introduce new ones.



What will happen when I get a joint injection?

Before the joint injection:

- you should only consume light diet before the procedure;
- wear loose clothes that can be pulled up to uncover the joint(s) that need to be injected;
- a nurse on the ward or in clinic will ask you some questions about your health; and
- your nurse will talk to you about what will happen and help you with any worries you have. She / He will show you the equipment that will be used and show you how it works. She / He will talk to you and your parents about strategies you can use to help you feel calm and relaxed during the injection; for example, she / he might help you practice deep, slow breathing.

What is Laughing Gas?

- Laughing Gas (Entonox) is a gas that you breath in during the injection. It makes you feel the injection much less and helps you feel relaxed. The nurse will help you practice breathing, through the mouth piece that is connected to a tube before and help you during the injection.

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.

During the joint injection:

- Your parents can stay with you the whole time to help you feel safe and take your mind off the injection.
- You will go into a room with a bed and some equipment. A nurse will be there to check you are ok.
- You start breathing the laughing gas and in 1 - 2 minutes, it will start to take effect. The doctor and nurse usually know when it is working as you look sleepy or start giggling.
- The doctor will clean the skin around the joint with an alcohol swab or spray. This can be quite cold.
- A needle attached to a syringe is inserted into the joint. You might feel some discomfort but the laughing gas should stop the needle feeling sharp. Deep breathing at this point will help.
- 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 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 more than one joint injection, the doctor will do it straightaway while you are still relaxed and breathing in the gas.

After the injection:

- The laughing gas can make your mouth feel dry. Some people feel a little sick but when you stop breathing the laughing gas, it goes out of your system very quickly and you should start feeling better. A drink soon after can help. As soon as you feel well enough, you can go home, usually around 15 minutes later.
- 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/s 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 injections. Signs of infection is redness and swelling of joint, feeling unwell and a high temperature
- If you are worried about pain or how the joint looks afterwards, please ring us or see your GP.

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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© The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust • 3rd edition (Ver 1)
Developed by: Laura Brooker, Clinical Nurse Specialist
Produced by: Medical Illustration Services
MID code: 20210607_008/IH

LN000154
Publication date
06/2022
Review date
06/2024